

EXTREMISM & VIOLENCE PHENOMENON

From Facing Effects to Studying Causes

A Selection of Researchers and Writers



Prepared by

Qatar's Research and Studies Center



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In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful

{Say, "O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion other than the truth and do not follow the inclinations of a people who had gone astray before and misled many, and have strayed from the Right Path."}

[Al-Mā'idah (The Table): 77]



His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Emir of the State of Qatar



His Highness
H.H Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani
The Heir Apparent

Introduction

His Excellence

Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs



Praise be to Allah Who made the nation of the Seal Prophet the best nation brought out as an example for humankind. This is due to the human values it possesses. These values save man's dignity, achieve equality and justice, and represent an example of a moderate religion, nation and civilization. In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Thus We have made you [true Muslims], a just (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over the people and the Messenger [Muhammad (PBUH)] be a witness over you..."}***
>
> [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

To illustrate, establishing the culture of moderation, and rejecting both immoderation in religion and extremist thoughts and actions are of the greatest merits of the Muslim nation as well as the most prominent qualities of its civilizational message. That is, moderation is a standard of civilization, a human mission and a condition that entitles its owner to be a witness over people (i.e., regarding the dissemination of each prophet's message), as came in Allah's Words: ***{"...a just (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over the people..."}***. Furthermore, the presence of this condition rectifies human acts, corrects the course of civilization and restores right to its true position.

Consequently, witnessing over people and undertaking the duty of achieving moderation require a set of characteristics, attributes, qualifications, specializations, experiences and knowledge that all focus on building the sound vision of values which is derived from the Glorious Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. The Muslim nation, however, cannot obtain these values until it first applies them perfectly. To that end, the Muslim Nation should correct its vision, way of life, thought and action, and should realize the Prophet Muhammad's testimony (for his nation's truthfulness concerning the dissemination of each prophet's message). This can only be achieved by adhering to the divine values and following the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH). In this connection, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...and the Messenger will be a witness over you..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

In another verse, Allah says:

{"...so the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people..."} [Al-Hajj (Pilgrimage): 78]

The Muslim's ultimate end should be to correct the way s/he follows the Prophet (PBUH), and his/her mission should be to bear these values and spread moderation among the people. As a result, peace and security will spread while extremism and corruption will vanish.

May the peace and blessings of Allah be upon the one who has taught people all that is good; Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), whom Allah sent as a mercy to the worlds, and who said:

"This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, deception of the falsifiers, and distortion of the extremists."

[Related by Al-Bayhaqī]

In this *Hadīth*, the Prophet (PBUH) entrusted the just scholars, the inheritors of the prophetic knowledge in every generation, to protect values against immoderation, distortion and misinterpretation.

This is the 6th issue of the extended series of "Collective Cultural Projects" entitled **"Extremism and Violence Phenomenon: From Facing Effects to Studying Causes."** This issue has been brought forth under hard circumstances when all cultural, political and economical matters are confused, conceptions are misunderstood, facts are falsified, and just scholars and trustworthy *Faqîhs* are marginalized. Not only that, but this issue has been brought forth in a time when the pretenders have become many, the sleeping sectarian dissensions have been awakened, and the history of dissensions has been recalled in order to arouse enmity and antagonism on the one hand, and divide the nation into sects and parties on the other hand.

Under the wing of this false cultural atmosphere partiality, fanaticism and sectarianism which substitute hatred for love, ignorance for knowledge, innovated matters in religion for the *Sunnah*, and extremism for moderation. This is a time when the Muslim nation is in urgent need for just and trustworthy scholars, experts and *Faqîhs* in order to restore matters to their normal position by introducing convincing *Shar'î* views, providing solutions, building strategies and drawing a plan for a way out of this dilemma.

There is no doubt that the phenomenon of violence, extremism and immoderation, like any other social phenomenon, only grows in a suitable environment made up of a set of political, social, cultural, economical, educational and even religious causes that support it. This is due to the fact that this phenomenon is complicated in nature so it cannot be the result of just one reason. Consequently, dealing with it directly without exploring and studying its roots and causes, or thinking that its solution may be reached by only confrontation and security means may cause it to become worse. There are uncountable proofs that resorting to security means and methods fails to handle this problem. Moreover, it has been practically proven that the policy of suppression and violence does not represent a solution; rather, it causes violence and deepens enmity.

Here, we do not underestimate the importance and necessity of the security solution which deals with the effects of violence and tries to handle

its consequences. But the problem lies in the excessive use of security and relying on it as the only treatment for such complicated phenomena whose underlying causes need to be treated. This is because, as long as the causes of the phenomenon exist, it will remain and be liable to grow, even if the security solution of suppressing the problem for a period of time seems to succeed in terminating it.

Lack of freedom, inequality, absence of equal opportunities, blocking channels of expression, violation of human rights, suspension of dialogue and consultancy organizations, and discarding others and denying their rights, are all reasons that may cause violence and extremism. Extremism often arises from suppression and oppression, but not from poverty and need.

Our aim is to confirm that the call for studying the causes of the phenomenon of violence and extremism, and suggesting ways of treating and preventing it does not necessarily mean allowing violence and terrorism, as some people might claim. The reason behind this is that acts of terror and oppression against the secured and safe or violation of their rights and dignity cannot be carried out by a true Muslim, even if he claims to be so. In fact, this call is an attempt to explain these phenomena, not to justify them.

In our opinion, preventing analysis and study of the real causes that lead to terrorism and violence, and accusing those conducting such studies of allowing violence and extremism, is the way terrorists think and a coverage for the real extremist and terrorist.

After all, we have to remember that the goal of Islam is to spread mercy among the people. Mercy is the aim for which Prophethood has been sent. Hence, any act, thought or practice that deviates from this aim, for whatever reason, is not from the teachings of Islam. Moreover, violence and extremism have been and still are among the faults of the so-called religiosity which need an effective treatment.

Through this collective cultural accomplishment, we do not claim that we have handled all aspects of the problem in detail. It is sufficient for us to open the door to review and re-examine the problem in an attempt to

restore an effective procedure; form a mentality that aims to rectify, examine and analyze; find out about causes; correct the image of those who adhere to the teachings of Islam; exonerate Islam from violence and extremism; and possess the ability to overcome any setbacks that the Muslim nation suffers due to inside or outside factors.

We admit that, through this cultural project, we present an open file that cannot be tackled by just one book or a small collection of books. As we have mentioned earlier, it is sufficient for us that we have put the subject under examination and study in order to find solutions to the problem. Also, we have attempted to give an overall view of the cultural status, or the cultural reality of the Muslim world as well as the way their prominent Muslim figures think. This, of course, represents a great part of the correct way towards finding a solution and a guide for future cultural work, if Allah wills.

Regarding this collective cultural project, I would like to thank His Highness Sheikh Ḫamad Ibn Khalîfah Âl Thânî, Prince of Qatar, may Allah guard him, for his encouragement, his continuous sponsorship of such projects, his instructions to translate them into other languages for the interest of the people and his constant effort to enlarge the circle of contributors.

I would also like to thank the authors and researchers whose immediate response and contributions had a great effect on accomplishing this great project. I wish to express our appreciation to our brothers in the Research and Studies Center of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, who have taken on their shoulders the responsibility of this cultural work despite the modest facilities they possess.

I ask Allah to grant us all success! Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.



About the Book



Extremism and Violence Phenomenon... From Facing Effects to Studying Causes is the sixth collective cultural project in our extended and promising cultural series. This series introduces, through its perspective and structure, a forum and space for dialogue, discussion, consultation, thinking, training on teamwork and readiness to accept others' opinion. This is in addition to help eliminate the psychological, intellectual and even cultural barriers present in the Muslim nation, and those present in other nations. However, admitting the existence of others does not necessarily mean one approves of their beliefs. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"For each there is a direction towards which they face..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 184]

Moreover, this cultural series helps develop a sense of criticism, train the mind to review and evaluate, and help it to detect flaws and determine the reasons for dereliction, based on the *Shar'î* reference of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. These critical reformative attempts we seek come from the rule that says: "Everyone is liable to make mistakes, except the Prophet (PBUH)." To substantiate, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"All men err but the best of those who err are those who are repentant."

[Related by At-Tirmidhî]

Accordingly, criticism, review and reformation are, in fact, attempts that focus on collective intellectual repentance.

Perhaps the phenomenon we introduce in this book or call to the field of thought, review and rectification is one of today's most serious and complicated issues. It is one of the momentous phenomena that has internationally intensified and expanded to the extent that no one can be safe from it. Even in the absence of direct material action, its effects of fear and anxiety have become common human destiny. That is, globalization is not only limited to economy, trade, etc., but it also reaches out to everything, particularly the phenomena of extremism, violence and terrorism. These phenomena are aimed to be spread throughout the globe and framed as a world war, using every possible justifications and excuses. In fact, it makes one suspicious that the Muslim countries have been chosen to be the battlefield, the financer and the victims – not the martyrs and sacrifices – as if violence and extremism are restricted only to the Muslims, their countries and their religion. Gradually, many Western politicians, clergymen, thinkers and civilization scholars have begun to claim that Islam is the source of violence, and, therefore, the only way to stop terrorism, extremism and violence is to control the Muslim's institutions, schools, mosques, charitable societies and curricula and corrupt the *Shar'ī* concepts under the pretext of "drying the springs of terrorism."

In reply to the above, we say, "If violence, extremism and terrorism are really the targets of such men, it is then necessary to find alternatives that represent a real solution and encourage the trends of moderation and human principles exhorted to by the Islamic values as mercy to the world." However, in fact, we are sorry to say, "These calls are full of malicious discrimination based on civilizational conflict and on the principle of "the survival of the strongest". Moreover, there are traces of the crusade spirit still existing in the Western mentality, in addition to the obvious ethnic trends that propose many forms of provocative and opposing ideas, which result in violence and extremism, in order to justify their aggression against Islam and Muslims."

We are not trying to exempt our societies from the existence of any phenomena such as violence and extremism in our cultural or religious life, or even from tendencies that enable enemies to make claims and practice intellectual terrorism against us, so as to prevent us from studying these phenomena and determining their effect on us and studying any negative religious factions or any negative factions present in our civilization or society. This is due to the fact that there is no nation, religion, culture or era void of extremist or violent factions. Nevertheless, the problem lies in restricting this phenomenon to the Muslims only and in the way it is dealt with.

In the beginning, we would like to admit that violence, extremism, immoderation, terrorism, etc. are condemned, regardless of their forms, types or causes. Also, our study of the causes of these phenomena is an explanation and analysis, not a means of justification. The general rule states: As long as causes behind violence exist, it will be there. Moreover, this phenomenon can only be totally eliminated – in the long-term – by treating its causes.

We also believe that only treating the effects, as is the case now, will not eradicate violence but it will just alleviate its consequences. However, we are not against treating these effects, as this is a necessary procedure, but we refuse to take the security solution as the only way to deal with these effects, without taking the actual causes and motives into account. To illustrate, evidence has proved that the security solution alone is not effective; rather, it results in arousing violence and terrorism, expanding their range and taking them beyond their normal limits, so creating a horrible state full of panic and terror.

It is logically clear that violence is returned with violence, and so is terrorism. There is uncountable evidence in this respect. Hence, terrorism still grows, especially after launching the "World War against Terrorism," so making laws to fight it and using these laws as excuses to violate human rights. Moreover, emergency laws have been replaced by anti-terrorism laws that have been used as means of abusing authority and depriving citizens of their rights of free thought and expression. It would be very dangerous to attribute the growth of terrorism to a lack of applying force rather than finding its real causes.

It can be said that some entities benefit from spreading an atmosphere of terrorism and intimidation to justify their harsh practices, interfere in others' affairs and violate other countries' sovereignty and individual rights. Thus, these entities strongly refuse to define terrorism under a certain definition so they may not be accused of it and their true intentions and reality may not be uncovered. Meanwhile, they practice intellectual terrorism against whoever tries to study the real causes of terrorism, in order not to unveil their true face. Not only that but they also accuse knowledge-seekers of allowing and justifying terrorism.

While outlining the focus points, for example, the political, economical, cultural and religious points, we have mentioned the most important causes of terrorism so as to be discussed and studied.

We have exerted great efforts to contact various experts in many fields and make use of cultural geographies, keeping away from doctrinal, sectarian and biased views. Also, we have carefully tried to skip oft-repeated titles of seminars and conferences as well as the names of those who have undertaken them as a profession and, as a result, may be intellectually exhausted.

We do not claim that this book covers all points that need to be tackled. This is because violence is a complicated phenomenon caused by many factors: political tyranny, lack of freedom, inequality, blocking the channels of expression and monopolization of authority. Furthermore, there are other factors contributing to this phenomenon such as the economical problems resulting from widespread poverty and deprivation, and grudge among classes caused by misappropriation of wealth, in addition to social, cultural and educational factors.

We have to admit that our work is an attempt and a role for consideration and study that have not achieved the desired goal. However, we believe that whatever cannot be totally taken should not be totally left. Through this work, we may have succeeded in shedding light on prominent figures of thought and how they think and deal with this serious issue. That is to say, one can clearly see that our major problem of backwardness lies in the fact that we suffer a crisis of prominent figures of thought, and not a crisis in the nation as a whole.

It may be useful to point out that the preparation of this project took a considerable time. It, also, faced many obstacles such as apologizing to some researchers who committed themselves to contribute to the project, but at an inappropriate time. To illustrate, accepting such contributions at a later time would have had a negative effect, especially after the most recent views of their writers might have already been revealed due to the fast flow of information. Our excuse, however, is that we are dealing with living and so evolving ideas, not outdated ones.

We should not be surprised – as it is a part of the cultural reality – that many points, when tackling this phenomenon, lack objectiveness. That is, many of us are still controlled by the illusion that all words fit every situation. Strangely, some of us still, irrationally, write in the same way they speak with their tongues, and imagine that problems can be solved through some enthusiasm, emotion and excitement.

On this occasion, we would not like to forget to appreciate the positive response of some researchers by considering views and accepting amendments in their contributions in an attempt to produce a work characterized by a harmonious and collective approach.

Additionally, we want to point out that these contributions had to be limited according to dates of delivery and preparations for printing, taking into consideration both the standing and scientific value of each researcher.

Furthermore, we would like to emphasize that the proposed opinions and deductions do not necessarily represent the Ministry's views. It can be said that some of these views do not, in fact, represent the Ministry at all, but rather, they may be under consideration. However, such views give space to explore thoughts and opinions, which is among the most important goals of our work.

As mentioned earlier, this book – with all its contributions – provides a room for exchanging views and stimulating minds, and it is not a book of jurisprudence that determines rulings pertaining to what is lawful and what is unlawful.

On this occasion, we would like to thank the writers and researchers who have contributed to this work. Also, we are grateful to the staff of the Research and Studies Center due to their participation in completing this book, in spite of the difficult conditions and the modest human capabilities.

We ask Allah, Exalted be He, to make this work useful and make it a right step on the long path. Moreover, we ask Allah to make it a noteworthy banner of enlightenment and keen insight into this serious era of the journey of mankind with all its consequences. May Allah help, with this book, the contemporary Muslims to understand their message and be aware of the plots and obstacles that face Islam, so they will be able to convey it to all the people and attract them to the shade of Allah's Mercy.

He is the Best One to be asked for help!



Extremism and Violence Phenomenon

From Facing Effects to Studying Causes



Main Points

Introduction: Shedding Light on the Meanings of Terms and Removing the Confusion of Concepts:

- Meaning and Confusion of Concepts.
- Concepts: Violence, extremism, terrorism, immoderation, terrorism practiced by regimes, terrorism practiced by individuals, concept of *Jihâd* (fighting in Allah's cause).
- History and Causes of Extremism and Violence.

First Point: The Political Dimension of Violence:

- Political tyranny and dictatorship, absence of equal opportunities, absence of consultation and reliance on people who are loyal to the authority while, at the same time, discharging those who have experience.
- Attempts of suppressing, eliminating or not acknowledging the "other's" view, and violating human rights.
- Occupation, practice of the policy of partiality, use of security as the only solution to handle matters.
- Fabricated and overlooked terrorism.

Second Point: The Social Dimension of Violence:

- Social corruption and injustice, failure of developmental plans and projects and lack of job opportunities.
- Withdrawing from society, judging it from the outside, and turning to secret opposing activities.
- Absence of civil society institutions or their inability to undertake their assigned role.
- Family violence: Its effect on social dissolution and degeneracy, and the emergence of vagrancy.

Third Point: The Cultural Dimension of Violence:

- Spread of fanaticism, absence of speech and pluralism of cultures, and lack of freedom of expression.
- Shortage of cultural programs and curricula that provide an open culture, so enabling to deal with real life.
- Attempts of exercising civilizational dominance, putting the Islamic World under focus, stripping the nation of its Islamic identity and not condemning terrorism or racism in all parts of the world.
- Absence of criticism and study of previous experiments and not accepting others' opinions.

Fourth Point: The *Fiqhî* (i.e. Jurisprudential) Dimension of Violence (The Desired *Fiqh*):

- Absence of the formulation of a sound *Fiqh* necessary for fulfilling the nation's needs, coping with the nature of this era and achieving the goals of religion.
- Lacking the correct understanding of the dimensions of charging (legal ordinances and being accountable for them), realizing the limits of capability, and risking to set *Shar'î* (i.e. legal) rulings in accordance with everyday situations.
- Doctrinal fanaticism as well as racial and sectarian partiality.

Fifth Point: The Future Dimension:

- From recalling the past to understanding the present and building the future.
- Detecting the flaws and providing practical plans to treat the causes of extremism.
- A future vision towards the way of overcoming extremism and violence phenomenon.



Extremism

Connotation of Term and Confusion of Concept



Dr. 'Abdul-'Azîz Ibn 'Uthmân At-Twijrî

General-Director, Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-ISESCO

A rational and sensible method for reform is one that involves wisdom, foresight and deliberation so that all manifestations of corruption in all its forms, especially financial, political and economic corruption - in a general sense - along with administrative corruption, are completely eliminated. In this manner, the affairs of the society may be set straight and the factors that incite extremists, those who resort to severity and the disgruntled may also be eliminated.

From a relative standpoint, extremism can refer to both excessiveness as well as negligence, but in both cases it is blameworthy when weighed against the *Sharî* principle that states that the best of affairs is that which is moderate.

So, not all types of extremism bear the same meaning in every place and every time since definitions, notions and understandings change from one case to another and vary from one situation to the next. For this reason, it is neither wise nor reasonable to define extremism as the criminal act that is prohibited by *Sharî'ah* as well as rejected by the society, since, as we have stated, there are differences between one type of extremism and another.

If we refer back to language and *Shar'î* terms, we shall find that extremism was never known in the sense it is known today and never bore this connotation.

In *Kitâb At-Ta'rîfât*[1] (Book of Definitions), it is mentioned that the difference between excessiveness and negligence is that excessiveness is used to describe exceeding a specified limit so as to add to that which is already complete or to go too far. Negligence, on the other hand, is used to describe that which has passed the limits so as to become deficient or insufficient. Additionally, the word obstinacy refers to the idea of pressurizing by confining or constraining, or forcing one to adhere to that which cannot be adhered to.

In Ar-Râghib Al-Asfahânî's *Mufradât Alfâz Al-Qur'ân*[2] (The meaning of the words of the Qur'ân) book, he stated that the extreme state, from

(1) 'Alî Ibn Muhammad Ash-Sharîf Al-Jurjânî, *Kitâb At-Ta'rîfât* (Book of Definitions), Beirut, Librairie du Liban, 1990, p.33.

(2) Ar-Râghib Al-Asfahânî, *Mufradât Alfâz Al-Qur'ân* (The meaning of the words of the Qur'ân), Damascus, Dâr Al-Qalam edition, 2003, p.517.

which extremism is derived, is a side or section of a particular matter, and it is used to describe parts of objects, periods of time as well as other things. Allah refers to this meaning when He says:

{"That He might cut down a section..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 127]

In this sense, to cut down a section of something is to reduce it and hence make it weaker and ultimately removing it.

In *Mufradât Alfâz Al-Qur'ân* (The meaning of the words of the Qur'ân), we also find that immoderation is used to describe exceeding a specified limit. It is often used in connotation with prices. for example, it is said that the price is immoderate. Allah says:

{"...do not commit excess in your religion..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 171]

Al-Asfahânî also stated that the word 'intensity' refers to immoderation and exceeding a specified limit, as Allah says:

{"And indeed he is, in love of wealth, intense."}

[Al-'Âdiyât (The Chargers): 8]

Immoderation is of two kinds: The first is that which is comprehensive and belief-oriented, and the second is that which is partial and practical in nature. While the former pertains to *Sharî'ah* in its entirety and to issues of creed, the latter pertains to specific, practical issues of *Sharî'ah*, whether these issues are associated with spoken words or actions [1].

Linguistically then, we find that extremism means the extreme of a given object or period of time, etc., while terminologically speaking it means to go beyond the limits of moderation. The relationship between the linguistic and terminological definitions is easy to see, since practically everything has a center and two extremes or ends. So, if one were to go beyond the center or middle of something and towards one of its extremes, it would be said that he has gone to extremes, or gone beyond the limits of moderation; it may also be said that he has not been moderate.

(1) 'Abdur-Rahmân Al-Luwayhiq, the problem of immoderation in religion today, Beirut, Ar-Risâlah Institution, 1999, vol. 1, p. 23-25.

Based on this, extremism is equally applicable to negligence as it is to immoderation. On one side, immoderation exceeds specified limits and on the other negligence does not meet them. In this sense, it also encompasses the terms "excessiveness" and "negligence" since both notions suggest veering towards the extreme and away from the middle path.

At a more specific level, it hence follows that carelessness and negligence in carrying out required Islamic legal obligations is extremism just as immoderation and excessive stringency is extremism; this is because Islam decrees moderation and is itself the religion of moderation. The Qur'ân alludes to this in Allah's saying:

> ***{"...And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely."}*** [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 29]

Also in His saying:

> ***{"...and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess."}*** [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 31]

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"This is a firm religion, so penetrate into it gently. This is because the traveler who exhausts his ride does not reach his destination nor spare his ride."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bazzâr and Ahmad]

Similarly, it is said that a person has extremist views when he has delved into severity and fanaticism. Therefore, the extremist person is the one who is far from the center or middle path, as well as the one who is far from being reasonable or fair.

Another context is referred to in the saying, "the man was situated on the edge and so was prey for the wolf." This means that he was situated or positioned on the edge of a group of people or crowd and, hence, became vulnerable and, consequently, became prey for the wolf.

This last example is very worthy of contemplation since to become prey for a wolf is certain devastation; and likewise, extremism is to throw oneself into devastation, loss and ruin.

Extremism in religion, or immoderation in religion – may hence be described as exceeding the limit. This limit is defined as the '**comprehensive Islamic median of the elements of truth and justice that is away from the extremes of opposition and contradiction**'. As stated before, this applies to extreme negligence as well as extreme excess.

An example of extremism in terms of excess is to deify the mind or intellect and deny that revelation is knowledge or a source of knowledge, while hoisting the banner of enlightenment through secular western positivism that upholds that the only authority over the mind is the mind alone, hence deifying the mind and elevating its power and capacity from the relative to the absolute.

In contrast to this form of extremism, (i.e. extremism by way of excess), is, as mentioned previously, extremism due to negligence which renounces and shuns intellectual contemplation altogether, thereby neglecting to appeal to the mind, a gift endowed upon man by Allah, and is, in itself, the essence of man and the characteristic that differentiates and raises him above other creations. Proponents of this form of extremism are content to stop at the merely apparent meanings of revelation[1].

It is the movement to either of these two extremes, excessiveness or negligence, that defines extremism, for in both cases it is to exceed specified limits, according to Ar-Râghib Al-Asfahânî's definition for the term of immoderation.

In this respect, extremism is, in fact, synonymous with immoderation and ultimately similar to it with regards to its meaning, connotation and practice, as well as its consequences and results.

In spite of the fact that jurists had, in the past, commonly used the word 'extremism' to signify words or actions that violated Islamic legislation – such as the context referred to by Ibn Taymiyyah when he said, "...and all too often some extremist jurists make mistakes...." Also another example of a different meaning of this word is illustrated in Allah's saying:

> ***{"And perform prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night."}*** [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 114]

(1) Muhammad 'Imârah, articles on religious and irreligious immoderation, Cairo, Ash-Shurûq International Bookshop, 2004, p. 7.

It is evident that the meaning alluded to in this verse suggests that the word extremism, ('extrémisme' in French) was not commonly used in the context which suggests 'fundamentalism', 'radicalism', 'fanaticism' or 'intégrisme', given the similarity between the English language and other foreign languages.

Extremism then, is to incline to either of the two poles that, between which, lay the elements that constitute a balanced human existence. It is also to incline to the consequences that arise through such an inclination, such as extreme bias and excessive stringency, fanaticism and severity; all of which serve to extinguish the flame of human intellect and prevent one from appreciating or profiting from contemplating that which benefits him, those nearest to him, his family, kin and country, and ultimately that which benefits humanity and the world around him.

To refute the blessing of thought and contemplation, which the person whose affairs have swayed to the state of extremism has done, is to reject a favor Allah has bestowed upon man and to deny the blessings He, Exalted be He, has conferred upon him.

Therefore, if extremism is to deviate from having a balanced thought and to conform to the tendencies of evil and to the insinuations of Satan, then the results of this conformity, no matter what the circumstances leading to it or the reasons behind it were, - according to solid and comprehensive evidence from the Glorious Qur'ân - mean corruption on earth. For corruption on earth is, in fact, animosity towards Allah and His Prophet (PBUH), as well as animosity to Allah's creation and a criminal act, in an absolute sense, against every human on the face of the earth. This is expressed by the modern term, 'crimes against humanity'.

Extremism, however, is not specific to one group of people more than another or to one race more than another or to one religion more than other religions; for, as stated earlier, extremism is a crime committed against humanity that deserves punishment. Based on this, it is unacceptable to logically, legitimately or lawfully describe extremism as being **'Islamic Extremism'**, **'Christian Extremism'**, **'Jewish Extremism'**, **'Buddhist Extremism'** or to describe it as being 'Arab extremism', 'Indian extremism' or 'German extremism' since it has no religion or nationality.

Extremism is also a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is comprised of ideological, cultural, religious, political as well as social and psychological dimensions. Each of these dimensions has its influence upon both individual and social behavior, and upon the extremist's relationship with the society and the types of interactions he experiences with others.

Extremism also defies and dishonors political systems, while ideologies, schools of thought and belief systems can be affected by or even conform to it. Also, jurists from any of the three religions (Islam, Christianity or Judaism) are susceptible to explaining religious teachings and texts inclining to, or in accordance with extremist views or in isolation. All of these dimensions, regardless of what they signify or entail, in fact demonstrate the abnormality of this phenomenon; since most societies, be they large or small, do not incline towards extremism nor take it as a political school of thought. Nor do they accept, as part of their religion, calls to extremism or immoderation or to the misinterpretations of those who understand religion in this manner.

Extremism is, without doubt, a disease that causes those afflicted with it to suffer from depression, isolation, introversion and an affinity for breaking off from the majority. Furthermore, those afflicted with extremism often suffer from an inferiority complex which often leads to feelings of spite and hatred for the others, whether they be individuals, groups or societies. Conversely, a person afflicted with extremism may also suffer from a superiority complex due to his belief that he is correct and rightly-guided, and that others are wrong and have strayed. Compound ignorance exacerbates a person's extremism further as it prevents a person from knowing that he doesn't know, so allowing him to believe that he holds the truth in an absolute sense and that others are both ignorant of that truth and absolutely wrong.

Individuals afflicted by religious extremism are quick to jump from judging others as being wrong and astray to judging them as being infidels, or to deciding that they are to be ostracized from a group or even liquidated all together claiming, further, that this is an act of worship. The fact that

killing for such reasons is often considered as *Jihâd* (fighting) in the cause of Allah may also become a pretext for initiating a 'holy war' against the society that has been labeled by the extremist as falling under those upon whom is the wrath of Allah and those who have strayed. This is the ideology of uprooting or exterminating individuals and it is this ideology that needs to be regarded as terrorism in all respects.

How many an article of wisdom has been written in criticism, condemnation and incrimination of extremism and how many an international thinker, well established in the understanding of social phenomena, has concurred with other thinkers that extremism is an illness, indeed, a contagious epidemic that opposes the benefits of justice, tolerance and progress.

One of the more popular commentaries on extremism is from an article by the French author, Voltaire, in which he mentions that, "Extremism is a disease created due to the results of the accumulation of different symptoms that pass through dangerous complicated situations, starting with a bias for a particular person or opinion that then transforms into zeal and enthusiasm, leading to pessimistic perceptions of reality and ending, ultimately, in a denial of 'the other' opinion (or those holding different opinions)."

The Philosophic Dictionary gives the word 'extremism' a quite concise definition, explaining that, "Extremism is an unbalanced rush towards, or absolute support for a single opinion or view that drives a person to a state of closed-mindedness and psychological anxiety which prevents him from differentiating between that which is good and that which is better, as well as that which is bad and that which is worse."

Moreover, on extremism, the German philosopher Emanuel Kant said, "Extremism, in a general sense, is the uttering of certain words or the practice of certain actions that go beyond human rationality."

The French philosopher, Alain, is reported to have said, "For a person or group of people to incline towards confining society to themselves or to their group, and to limiting it to those who agree with them is an impossibility and is the very essence of extremism."

Another philosopher states that, "An extremist is nothing more than a skilled assassin, either in the sense that he, himself, carries out the killing or in that he incites others to kill, which, of course, makes him an accomplice in the crime of murder."

In addition to this last definition, we should mention that the extremist, by his deviation and estrangement from his society, as well as by his denial of its general mannerisms and standards and his voicing of that denial, sews within the nation the seeds of discord and tribulation which is referred to in the Glorious Qur'ân in Allah's saying:

{"...and fitnah is worse than killing."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 191]

It is important to note that most of these observations by European philosophers were made in the 18th century and it is this that proves that the phenomenon of extremism began in Europe.

It is also correct to say that any extremism consistently leads to violence and that violence leads to the worst results since it is essentially a violation of the law and forceful way to seize the right to punish that is solely the privilege of those in authority in instances when it is applicable and lawful.

As it is unacceptable to describe extremism as being religious or racial, it is also unacceptable to associate violence with a given religion or race, using such terms as "Islamic Violence", "Christian Violence" or "Jewish Violence", since violence is simply violence and is a crime punishable by law.

Also it is worth noting that there is a difference between an individual's practice of extremism and the call to it, just as it is important to stress that it is the Muslim individual's right to practice his religion in any given manner, regardless of how stringent that manner is upon himself, provided he has chosen this manner based on conviction, has the capability to practice in the manner he has chosen and provided he does not transcend his personal limits to affect and call those around him to act like him, much less base his call on force and violence.

Provided extremism does not turn into violence in any shape or form, it is relatively harmless, and this type of extremist is simply a deviant person and nothing more. Furthermore, while deviance often results in harmful consequences, the kind of deviance meant here is restricted to the self and not a kind that is harmful or contagious.

Some Reasons behind Extremism

Without doubt, violence is a criminal act as well as an act of animosity, and deviance in behavior, mannerisms and conduct by all forms of measure, for it indicates a deviance in disposition. As with all forms of deviance, violent activity comes with its own set of causes just as it comes with its own set of supposed objectives. While the causes of extremism and violence are numerous, the most important of them, as judged by social researchers, psychologists and lawmakers, can be confined to five points, summarized as follows:

1. Individual or Subjective Causes

These are causes that result from a deficiency in upbringing and education which culminate in a lack of a person's understanding of his religion. Factors leading to this deficiency include the lack of resources for appropriate education at an appropriate time, or, for instance, a deviation in the curriculum - either due to ignorance or radicalism - from that which is deemed acceptable. In either of these two cases, the education provided will not be of the standard that affords a person with the essentials of rationality and moderation. Another potential reason is an innate disposition towards excess or overzealousness that serves to drive one away from leniency and patience.

2. Objective Causes

These result from social circumstances and afflictions a person is exposed to, whether they be poverty and deprivation, tyranny and coercion, or general corruption, which can cause severe agitation in a person who may also be exposed to social, economic, political and ideological pressures. All of these factors come together to force an individual to accept and adopt deviant, radical and extremist directives that ultimately cause him to stray from rectitude and uprightness.

3. General Causes

These develop as a result of the attitude of an environment that neglects religious teachings altogether or where the teachings themselves are unsound. Owing to this kind of setting, an individual begins to yield to the burden of the circumstances surrounding him and develops a tendency to be whimsical and impulsive. This is exacerbated if he finds those who push or encourage him towards the pit of extremism and the adoption of violence, especially for the sake of coercing those around him to adopt the ideas that he has embraced, or for unleashing his anger, repression and feeling of deprivation on the society in the form desperate and despondent terrorist acts.

4. External Causes

By external we mean the causes and incentives that are imported from foreign places or elements that result in the creation of an environment appropriate for the cultivation of extremist ideas. These ideas are often aimed at driving individuals and groups to be hostile towards the society and they (the ideas) take advantage of poor economic circumstances and political corruption which, in themselves, are precursors to violence. As they are precursors, they also serve to exacerbate the violence that results from the extremist ideas with which the hearts and minds of desperate individuals are filled for the sake of actualizing the goals that aid these foreign elements.

5. Temporary Causes

These are also referred to as passing causes and they are those that appear suddenly and spontaneously in emergency situations which lead an individual to adopt extremist ideas that are not necessarily religious in nature and that incite him to carry out criminal acts of violence against a certain person or group at a certain time and for a certain purpose. These incentives then begin to disappear or weaken and their effect decreases before they vanish altogether.

In treating these five causes, as well as other causes we have not mentioned, it is important to go back to a proper understanding of Islamic and international reality as well as the analysis of data and information available to researchers that pertain to the general circumstances that prevail within the Islamic world. It is also important to carry out an observation of the political and economic topography as well as to have a comprehensive understanding of the different ideological currents and creeds that exist within the Islamic world.

Through intensive studies, scrutinizing research and much contemplation, we find that the Islamic world's current state is not pleasing for a variety of different reasons. From a political standpoint, Islamic societies are in disarray, panic and instability. Economically speaking, these societies are weak and well behind the pace of the international economy, and from the standpoint of information and technology, they are backward, deficient and considerably below the required standard.

Ideologically and culturally, they are characterized by disarray, indecisiveness and confusion, and the view from any other perspective is also not reassuring.

All of this has its repercussions upon both individual and society in general, and upon religion and culture in particular in that it creates an opening for the cultivation of extremist ideas from all directions.

Dr. Muḫammad Sa'îd Ramaḏân Al-Bûṯî stated that, "The West is not afraid of Muslim extremism, rather it is afraid of Islam itself...Extremism is a western product exported in an Islamic dress. The (Islamic) extremism that we see and hear about here and there is planned in western circles and is then exported to skilled collaborators and experts."

This opinion, held by this scholar and thinker known for his firm footing in Islamic sciences as well as in Islamic ideology and for his preaching of Islam with wisdom and in a way that is best, expresses one viewpoint which is an established fact known to those who understand affairs correctly and soundly, and have a deep knowledge of what goes on in the world today.

This, however, does not mean and cannot be understood to mean that the groups that resort to violence are justified or can be excused for their actions under any circumstances. This is because violence, as well as extremism, are rejected and prohibited in essence. We are, however, pointing out that the foreign forces that have declared their animosity for and aggression against Islam and the Islamic world, and that lay in ambush for Muslims as a whole, have their own set of different and varied methods and techniques to cultivate discord and tribulation in Muslim countries.

One such deceptive technique is the indoctrination of groups of young Muslims with extremist thoughts and ideologies that lead them to carry out violent acts so that the crime of terrorism can be blamed on Islam, and so that the circumstances that hamper the progress of the Islamic world and drag it behind may be further cultivated. In this lies the actualization of highly suspicious colonial, adversarial and racially prejudiced goals.

It is important that this reality be kept in mind as we research and search for the causes that lead to the spread of extremism and the factors that lead to violence, which are wrongfully attributed to false Islamic slogans.

Means of Treatment

We will conclude our study by taking a look at the ways in which the causes of extremism and immoderation can be remedied, and by summarizing the means that we believe will ensure the proper treatment of these causes.

The Renewal of Religious Discourse

This needs to be far-reaching enough so as to ensure a focused look at the current state and so that a new curriculum, in terms of both content and form, may be substituted for the currently recognized curriculum of religious teaching and Islamic propagation. In this manner, Islamic directives aimed at the young population will be deeper and have more impact, resulting in the required positive change. It is also necessary to point out that what is meant by, "the renewal of religious discourse," has nothing to do with the way the term is used in some circles to mean the actualization of goals that are beyond the scope of what we are mentioning here.

The Continuation of a General Reform

This is to be carried out within Islamic societies via a rational and sensible method based on wisdom, foresight and vision so that all manifestations of corruption, especially financial and economic corruption – in a general sense – as well as administrative corruption and corruption in the administration of public affairs may be eliminated.

In this manner, affairs within Islamic societies may be set straight and the factors that create incentives for deviants, extremists, radicals and the disgruntled to carry out terrorist actions against their societies as well as other societies may also be eradicated.

The Advancement of Economic Standards within Islamic Societies

Also required is the actualization of comprehensive development and the establishment of economic and political systems that seek to establish justice and to guarantee the right of every citizen to have an honorable living.

In this manner, poverty - in all its forms - as well as destitution, indigence, economic fragility and deprivation can be eliminated. These are the fundamental centers within which extremism, radicalism, deviance and the craving for revenge tend to flourish.

Leverage over the Media

The idea here is to use the media so that it deals with extremism and violence as two negative, deviant and abnormal phenomena, as well as crimes that are subject to punishment by law. In this manner, it would be possible for news systems in various media, whether broadcast, print or other media, to expose the extremism, violence and terrorism that are carried out under the pretext of religious belief and to reveal the aggressive and criminal nature of the acts committed by those within this circle. It would then also be possible to veer away from the habit of covering terrorist acts from a purely profit-based standpoint, or from the standpoint of sensationalism or the presentation of that which is simply entertaining with the goal of gaining a larger audience, or merely covering them for the sake of coverage and nothing more.

Taking Legal Restrictions into Account

In reacting to terrorists who use religion as a pretext for their actions, it is important for governments to take the individual rights of such culprits into consideration so no offences or transgressions of legal limits are committed regardless of the circumstances. Experience has shown that going to excess in reacting to extremists or terrorists who use Islam to justify their actions, or responding to them without considering the legal restrictions, can exacerbate extremism and fanaticism as well prevent those who may be willing to repent and return to moderation.

Taking the Relationship between these Factors into Account

In treating extremism and violence, it is important to take into consideration the relationship between the above factors so as to obtain a balance between the renewal of religious discourse, economic reform and the actualization of comprehensive development. This balance should be a part of the total reform that includes all aspects of society. This is necessary so that the process of reformation is genuine, effective and productive; since the affairs of a society can only be set straight if these factors complement each other in this scope.

Attempting to fight extremism and violence while there is still widespread poverty and pervasive corruption in public services and electives as well as in economic and educational policies will not produce the desired results and will culminate in wasted effort and running around in circles.

One of the things criminal experts and legal jurists agree on is that extremism is the basis of terrorism and that rather than simply being a security issue, it is also a deviant way of thought that is propagated (by certain elements) and leads to sapping a society's energy and it being dispersed within factional whirlpools and ambiguous ideologies. For this reason, the spread of extremism under the pretext of religion or religious belief is a looming danger since it violates a society's values and culture.

Due to these issues, responding to extremism and violence through the comprehensive, integrated and all-encompassing framework outlined above is a necessary measure in the process of treating extremism and for the eradication of the violence that results from it.



Fiqhî Dimension of Violence



Dr. Thaqîl Ibn Sâyir Ash-Shimarî

Judge of the Supreme Court (Qatar)

The Islamic nation continues to be afflicted by flimsy inexperienced individuals who allege to be knowledgeable and issue Fatwâs (i.e. legal opinions) without sound knowledge and thorough understanding of reality. The nation is also afflicted with scholars who distort the meanings of legal texts to conform to the whims of rulers. Indeed, some of their statements and legal opinions have gone so far as to provoke the sentiments of the Islamic nation and cause widespread anger. So, just as the former group has not acted correctly, the latter has not acted well and soundly either.

Extremism and terrorism have become the topics of the hour, leaving virtually no cultural, intellectual, scientific or social assembly devoid of a discussion regarding this issue. Moreover, we find that practically all broadcast media and television channels cover and analyze the incidents and causes related to these phenomena. Magazines and papers of various languages also allocate part of their pages to tackle such incidents, and international conferences are held to address its effects.

All of this is clear evidence of the presence of a complicated problem that is prevalent in human relations and that carries political, social, economic and intellectual ramifications. The result of all this is suffering at a global level, for the world, from north to south, and east to west, is tormented by the waves of extremism and terrorism that continue to thrust humanity into the heart of a problematic and calamitous existence.

Hardly a day passes without the various media apparatuses covering an act of extremism-induced terrorism, thereby emphasizing that extremism is a universal phenomenon which results from going to extremes either in intellectual, political, moral or religious fields.

This further signifies that extremism is not specific to developing countries; rather, it is something that exists and is the cause of a great deal of strife in both Europe and the United States, for instance. In fact, some researchers have confirmed that the phenomena of extremism and terrorism actually initiated in Western societies.

In the US, for example, researchers have studied and analyzed the ideology of many hard-line, sectarian, religious doctrines known as cults. In one incident, one such religious sect led its followers to commit collective suicide in the famous event at the colony of Guyana several years ago. This

group, commonly referred to as the 'Jones Group', was one whose adherents believed in radical religious ideas that ultimately led them to commit suicide in obedience to the instructions of their leader.[1]

Extremism is, therefore, not an Arab Islamic phenomenon, as some Western media systems claim, but a global phenomenon found in virtually every society. It is, without doubt, an unacceptable phenomenon that must be both combated and exterminated by all available means, for it poses a danger to the entire world.

If resisting extremism is an essential global task, then it is that much more essential and necessary for the Muslim society. This is because Islam is a religion that refuses extremism in all its forms and acts to obstruct its root causes and to bring an end to its methods, motives and incentives that cause people to fall into darkness and destruction.

Defining extremism

The term extremism in the Arabic language is used to refer to being situated at the end (of something), while the edge of anything is called an extreme. It is, therefore, opposite to the term middle that means being situated in the middle of something or between its two ends. Extremism is therefore considered to be a divergence from the middle to the end, which means to depart from that which is intended in all matters.

This spatial dimension in the Arabic language may carry mental or moral connotations, so that someone situated at 'the edge' may be considered introverted or isolated. Such a person may also hold viewpoints considered abnormal and different to the community he resides in, rendering him unable to establish contact with the rest of his community in spite of his physical presence among them.

It is for this reason that in the Glorious Qur'ân, this nation is referred to as the moderate nation, as Allah says:

> ***{"And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people..."}***
>
> [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

(1) 'Abdul-Qâdir Tâsh, Our Fate is to be Muslims.

Allah, Glory be to Him, has bestowed this attribute of moderation and fairness upon this nation in order that it may assume a very noble mission, namely, to bear witness over other nations.

Dr. Muhammad 'Awad At-Tartûrî clarified in his book (the Science of Terrorism) that the meaning of extremism in our contemporary reality is, "the belief of a person or a group that they monopolize the truth, so thinking that they alone are right while others are wrong or erroneous in their opinions. Consequently, they begin to sternly impose their views upon others through all available means, terrorism being one of them, and without paying heed to any rules or guidelines in order to achieve their objectives or meet their needs."

The commonly accepted meaning of extremism in the Islamic law, is "excessiveness in religion" that results in fanaticism and Puritanism as one exceeds set limits.

It is regarded as the exaggerated inclination towards adhering to the religion, and not inclining to deviate from it. It is also referred to as immoderation, stringency or severity, all of which we have been warned about and is prohibited in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Allah says:

> ***{"And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you may not transgress the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance."}***
>
> [Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful): 7-9]

He also says:

> ***{"And We have made you a median (i.e. just) community that you will be witnesses over people and the Messenger will be a witness over you..."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

Allah also says:

> ***{"And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow (other ways), for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed to you that you may become righteous."}*** [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 153]

Because of their excessiveness in religion, Allah dispraised the People of the Scripture, saying:

{"Say, O People of the Scripture, do not exceed the limits in your religion beyond the truth, and do not follow the inclinations of a people who were astray before (you) and also misled many and have strayed from the sound way."}

[Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 77]

The Noble Messenger (PBUH) affirmed that a Muslim should make religious matters easy and not make them difficult, and to give people glad tidings rather than drive them away from Islam.

In one *Hadîth*, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Religion is ease and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not exceed the proper limits, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings (that you will be rewarded); and gain strength by worshipping in the mornings, the evenings and a part of the night."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on Faith]

In another *Hadîth*, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Facilitate things for people concerning religious matters, and do not make them difficult for them, give (them) good tidings, and do not drive them away (from Islam)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim]

He (PBUH) also said:

"O people, beware of excessiveness in religion, for (nations) before you were ruined because of excessiveness in religion."

[Related by Imâm Ahmad]

Moreover, he (PBUH) was reported to have said:

"Ruined are those who indulge in fastidious religiousness."

[Related by Muslim]

Regarding this *Hadîth*, Al-Hâfiz said in his book *(Fathul-Bârî)*: "It embodies a warning against excessiveness in religion." He went on to say that: "Excessiveness in worship is to overburden the self to a level that is not permitted by Islam, for Islam has been described by the Wise Lawgiver as being 'easy and tolerant.' "

Violence

Violence is regarded as being the opposite of leniency. It also denotes stringency, harshness and handling matters in an intolerant way. Chiding also means blaming, reproaching and rebuking. But the meaning of violence, according to the usage of contemporary linguists, is to "harm others, either verbally or physically."

Such harm may be either forbidden, such as in cases where the perpetrator does not discriminate between right and wrong, justice and injustice, or it may be lawful if it is carried out in line with Islam and Islamic law without transgressing the limits of justice and security. The latter usually pertains to legal punishments carried out in the case of crime or contravention.

Fanaticism

Literally means to form groups or to assemble and support. As a juristic term, however, it means bias for a particular school over other schools and to give precedence to the statements of its scholars rather than those of other schools without considering the legal proofs.

This is regarded as being ignorant of Allah's religion as well as of the sources of Islamic legislation. In light of this phenomenon, the importance of sound *Fiqh* or jurisprudence which takes into account the nation's requirements, the nature of the times we live in and the events and calamities we face as well as the need to adhere to the objectives of *Sharî'ah* (Islamic Law) and religious fundamentals becomes evident.

Because these qualities are lacking in many of today's callers to Islam and because of their zeal to implement *Sharî'ah*, they often go about acting or behaving in ways that reflect badly on Islam and that lead to extremism and violence. This, in turn, causes both disunity and the regression of the nation, as well as causing it to be vulnerable to its enemies.

This is why the scholar who is well-versed in Allah's religion is destined for boundless good, as the Prophet (PBUH) referred to when he (PBUH) said:

> *"If Allah wants to do good for a person, He makes him understand the religion."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim]

Any rational individual in all times and places is aware of the importance of understanding Allah's religion well; and in this particular era of cultural interlinking, broader communications and advanced means of transport, our need for a proper understanding of religion is even more critical than our need for food and drink. Allah says:

> ***{"For there should stay (behind) from every division of them a group (remaining) to seek understanding in the religion and warn (advise) their people when they return to them that they might be cautious."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 122]

To comprehend Islam is to gain legal knowledge as well as understand its meanings and teach it to others. The abovementioned verse clarifies the significance of comprehending Islam and the dissemination of knowledge. Concerning this verse, Ibn Sa`dî said in his Qur'anic exegesis: "In this verse lies clear evidence and guidance and it refers to an important useful point, namely that Muslims are to choose and prepare those who will handle and conduct matters pertaining to public affairs and dedicate their time to such affairs, exerting every possible effort and avoiding any distraction. This is so that the affairs of the Muslims may be set straight and so they may achieve much good. This will also lead to a unification of purpose; that purpose being the rectification of both religious and material affairs."

Allah, Glory be to Him, explicates the virtue of comprehending Islam when He says:

> ***{"...But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or those of authority among them, then the ones who (can) draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it..."}***
>
> [An-Nisâ' (Women): 83]

He also says:

{"...But none will understand them except those of knowledge."}

[Al-`Ankabût (The Spider): 43]

Mu`âwiyah is reported to have said that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"If Allah wants to do good to a person, He makes him comprehend the religion. I am just a dispenser, but Allah is the One Who gives (people). (And remember) that (there will always be some people of) this nation (the Muslims) will keep on following Allah's teachings strictly and they will not be harmed by any one going on a different path till Allah's order (Day of Judgment) is established."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

In order for actions to be fruitful and compatible with legal interests, however, they need to be built on and preceded by knowledge. Actions that are performed without proper knowledge, on the other hand, are subject to error and may even lead to a violation of the law and the perpetration of that which is carried out in the name of religion and yet has nothing to do with it. Such actions are usually a result of misconceptions or deviant interpretations that are due to the acquisition of knowledge from places other than correct, acknowledged sources.

Alluding to the importance of this issue, scholars have stressed that it is incumbent to be familiar with and have knowledge of a given issue prior to taking action.

For this reason, Imâm Al-Bukhârî dedicated a chapter within the 'Book of Knowledge' entitled, 'the chapter of knowledge prior to practice' and derived proof for this from the verse that reads:

{"So know [O, Muhammad] that there is no deity but Allah..."}

[Muhammad: 19]

Regarding this verse, he comments that Allah, Glory be to Him, started with knowledge. Also, the Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said:

"The best of you in the pre-Islamic period are the best of you in Islam, if they comprehend (religious knowledge)."

[Related by Imâm Ahmad from Abû Hurayrah]

In another *Hadîth*, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Do not wish to be like anybody except in two cases: The case of a man whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it in the right way, and that of a man whom Allah has given religious wisdom (i.e., Qur'ân and Sunnah) and he gives his verdicts according to it and teaches it."*

[Related by Al-Bukhârî and others]

Comprehension in religion is that which stems from the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* in the way that these sources were understood by the Companions and those who followed them in faith, for the Glorious Qur'ân was revealed to them by the Prophet (PBUH) himself and they acted upon it, too.

The Prophet (PBUH) passed away after he had thoroughly and convincingly delineated and clarified the fundamentals of the nation's religion and had clearly shown its solid overriding principles, its impervious basics and its decisive essentials. As for the subsidiary issues of *Sharî'ah*, the door to *ijtihâd* (juristic reasoning) was left open for generations who seek enlightenment from the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* through his (the Prophet's) statements, deeds and tacit approvals.

The Prophet (PBUH) also taught the noble Companions the practice of *ijtihâd* and gave them the glad tidings of Allah's reward if they purified their intentions and exerted every possible effort to ascertain what Allah wants from His servants in such subsidiary injunctions.

The fact that Islam differentiates between fundamental and secondary issues, constants and variables, and verses that are precise and specific in meaning and those that are more general is alluded to by the verse in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"It is He Who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses which are precise - they are the foundation of the Book - and others unspecific..."}***

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 7]

This is regarded as clear proof of the permissibility of *ijtihâd* which produces a variety of different opinions regarding such secondary, variable and non-specific verses. Such plurality gives rise to a variety of different ways in which such secondary issues may be implemented in reality.

The words and clarifications of Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) alone, however, are the only sources of understanding the basic fundamental, unchanging principles of the religion and are a source of crystal clear evidence from which only those destined to perish deviate.

The fact that the Prophet (PBUH) left secondary issues open to *ijtihâd* is in itself proof that the resulting differences of opinion have to be tolerated and respected, and that in such difference lies both a need and a legal interest. It is, therefore, not unusual that such subsidiary issues of the *Sharî'ah* witnessed such a variety of opinions after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, understood that it was neither possible nor legally advantageous to force people, whether at an individual or general level, to abide by only one legal opinion in the secondary issues of Islam.

This was the path taken by the Companions and it is what allowed the scope of knowledge and understanding to tolerate considerable differences with regards to issues such as the place of the Prophet's (PBUH) burial, and the legality of dividing his estate among his family. Other differences included the choice of successor to undertake the task of directing the affairs of the recently-established Islamic State, leadership of Usâmah's army and the legitimacy of fighting against those who restrained from paying *Zakâh* as well as other issues that arose in succession in the history of the Islamic nation.

During the Prophet's lifetime, disagreements among the Companions with regards to subsidiary issues would be settled by the Prophet (PBUH), thus enabling the Companions to discern decisively between that which was right and that which was wrong. But the Prophet's death made the task of discernment considerably more difficult, not least because divine revelation had come to an end. Similarly, infallibility in issues of *ijtihâd* is not a characteristic of any human being, regardless of his status, as

only the Prophet (PBUH) was perfect in this regard. Indeed, because infallibility is a companion of Revelation and one of its attributes, it is understandable that when Revelation came to an end with the death of the Prophet (PBUH), infallibility in *ijtihâd* came to an end with it.

One might, therefore, say that the stage that followed the Prophet's death was the start of *ijtihâd* in religious issues and different branches of the *Sharî'ah* owing to the fact that the *ijtihâd* of the Companions during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH) actually became part of the *Sunnah* as the Prophet (PBUH) was there to approve or disapprove of their conclusions, thereby bringing their opinions within the realm of infallible Revelation.

If we assume this basic premise, it is then possible to say that the different Islamic doctrines originated in the Muslim world as a result of the occurrence of different incidents that required verdicts. Such incidents would then give rise to different opinions emanating from different interpretations of the texts because the incidents themselves could be interpreted in different ways. In this manner, the Companions and their successors would have different sets of views. The scientific domain, hence, enjoyed diversity in what might be referred to as juristic wealth. It is important to note that the gradual development of Islamic schools also allowed for the tolerance of opposing opinions held by other scholars who presented their own interpretations in given matters.

Also resulting from this was the belief that while only a single verdict could be the correct verdict, the means used to arrive at such a verdict need not be confined to a single correct means. Indeed, it is not possible for the means or the methods used to arrive at such verdicts to be confined to one path, just as it is not possible to unequivocally state that only one such means is the correct means as long as infallibility no longer exists.

It is, therefore, enough to practice personal interpretation with regards to matters where such interpretation is acceptable, through reliance upon the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, as well as the teachings of reliable, specialized scholars irrespective of the schools they belonged to or the methodology they used.

At this point, it is appropriate that we should take a look at the goals and objectives of the different Islamic doctrines and juristic schools that developed throughout the History of Islam, regardless of whether they have continued to this day or not. The aims or objectives of these schools may be stated as follows:

1. To Serve the *Sharī'ah*

Without doubt, the doctrines and schools that were named after the scholars who founded them were developed purely for the service of Islam and the sciences of the *Sharī'ah*. This service was employed by verifying the intent of Islamic Law regarding subsidiary issues and reviving the meanings incorporated in the legal texts from which subsidiary rules stem.

It is worth noting that these schools employed many scientific methods and cognitive tools for the purpose of arriving at the objectives of the *Sharī'ah* for such subsidiaries. Such tools and methods are known as the, 'principles of deduction and inference.'

Owing to the fact that the cognitive means and tools utilized by these doctrines in their attempts to deduce the intent of *Sharī'ah* were varied, the doctrines themselves also became varied and diverse.

In spite of such diversity, there was only one underlying objective for all of these schools, namely the service of the *Sharī'ah*.

It can also be said that the diversity of doctrines is attributable to the variety of principles of deduction as well as the different approaches used to infer given conclusions, as every doctrine is characterized by principles and approaches that are different from other doctrines.

Even though different doctrines use the same principles of deduction and methods of inference, this does not necessarily mean that they will lead to identical results. This is largely due to the fact that agreement on any given principle of deduction does not signify there is a consensus on the priority of the principle in relation to other principles.

For example, juristic analogy is a principle of deduction agreed upon by all Islamic doctrines, especially the four well-known ones. But there is a

difference with regards to its priority (of use) in relation to other deduction principles and inference methods. Hence, some doctrines will resort to it as a means of deduction after considering the means of 'consensus' whereas others consider it as a principle that is to be resorted to after viewing the 'verdict of a companion'.

It is possible to conclude by saying that the plurality of juristic schools is ascribable to the diversity of deduction principles and inference approaches; the more the means vary, the more the doctrines are numerous.

Furthermore, because there are no conclusive texts prohibiting the creation of new deduction principles or inference methods, it is advisable to view the juristic schools, whether they are current or out of use, as a means of serving Islam, particularly its scientific branches.

There is no denying that these doctrines have presented an abundance of juristic wealth that is a source of pride for the Islamic nation, and that has facilitated the public to comply with the commandments and prohibitions derived from the analytical texts of *Sharî'ah*.

Indeed, had it not been for these juristic schools, there would not be a single available rule or system that would hold the masses to the objectives of the *Sharî'ah* with regards to subsidiary issues. In addition to this, the Islamic nation should see the plurality of these doctrines, which, in itself, is strong, irrefutable evidence of the boundless breadth of juristic legal thought and the high level of deliberation that distinguishes the Islamic intellect from others.

Other evidence suggesting the breadth of Islamic jurisprudence is the multitude of different views and juristic interpretations that exist. Such variety is not to be considered blameworthy. Indeed, the laudable, trustworthy, well-versed and sincere jurist, Ibn Qudâmah Al-Hanbalî, known as 'the successful' or 'he who was made successful by Allah' whom Allah, Glory be to Him, made successful in the task of serving and benefiting the Hanbalî school of jurisprudence in particular, and comparative Islamic Jurisprudence in general, considered such disagreement as a kind of mercy and moderation.

In the preface of his book '*Al-Mughnî* (the Integrated Book)' he mentioned, "Allah, Glory be to Him, caused the relationship of this nation with its scholars to be like that of the previous nations with their prophets. He, Glory be to Him, created, within each class of jurists, Imâms who were role models (being more prominent scholars) and whose views could be adhered to. He also created, among the predecessors of this nation, Imâms who were outstanding, renowned scholars, and used them to pave the way for the foundations of Islam (Islamic jurisprudence) and to clarify equivocal rulings. Their consensus is considered decisively binding, while their difference of opinion is considered a mercy for the nation."

This is a very clear, outspoken response to those who seek to deny or invalidate the different juristic doctrines. Conversely, it is also a response to those who adhere to one doctrine or another fanatically without seeking to understand or comprehend given issues.

2. To Disseminate Knowledge and Education

Teaching Muslims the principles of their religion and educating the young generations are among the objectives that Islamic schools attempt to achieve.

Because the generations that embraced Islam after the cessation of revelation were not always able to understand, perceive or comprehend some of Islam's subsidiary issues, it was necessary that a group of scholars be designated to teach and explain the religion to these newcomers. This was exemplified by the Companions who dedicated themselves to teaching new Muslims both basic principles and secondary issues in a way that was clear and easy to understand.

With the end of the first century of *Hijrah* and with the changes in intellectual, political and social conditions as well as the nation's ability to communicate with other peoples, there developed a dire need to facilitate all available means to defend Islamic beliefs and protect Islam's unchanging fundamentals from change and to safeguard minds against indulging into doubtful matters or vain desires.

Disseminating legal Islamic education as well as that which is associated with it, is one of the primary objectives behind the emergence of Islamic doctrines, so that they are, in effect, a means employed to achieve this aim. Based on this view, there continues to be an urgent need for the maintenance of these doctrines by carrying out criticism, verification and rectification as they are essentially schools aspiring to diffuse legal education, and not fanatic elements of a specific doctrine or advocates for a particular group.

Indeed, latter, objectionable motives have tarnished the image of Islam and extinguished the light of impartial scientific endorsements. Among the scholars of these juristic doctrines, there was never anyone who claimed to monopolize truth or claimed that any other opinion besides his own was falsehood. Rather, the historical incidences of slander and the dissemination of suspicion among the followers of Islamic doctrines only developed after the disappearance of scholars capable of verifying and substantiating opinions and verdicts. Another reason leading to this situation was the exaggerated veneration laymen had for the verdicts of their Imâms as well as the elevation of these verdicts to a level higher than that of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*.

Indeed, some went so far as to suggest that prayer behind an Imâm of a different doctrine was invalid. It is mainly this kind of indiscriminate blind imitation that caused division, dissension and alienation within the nation. Perhaps for this reason, there are those who consider doctrinal fanaticism to be one of the most dangerous factors leading to religious oppression.

Without doubt, there is a dire need to show the reader how to deal with different Muslims in accordance to their different doctrines of creed and jurisprudence, as well as to lay the legal Islamic foundations for such interactions. This is especially significant to consider since the interpretation of texts cannot be carried out by those who are not specialized or qualified to make such interpretations.

Clearly, he who delves into an area that he is unfamiliar with and is bold enough to transgress the limits of the protected texts of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* without heed for the guidelines laid down by trustworthy scholars is destined to slip into dangerous predicaments capable of destroying him and those who follow him.

This is something we often see. The acts of discrediting doctrines and being infatuated with finding faults with them or instigating sentiments against them without following a well-established scientific procedure, or initiating such actions by those who are not well-versed in such matters results in unspeakable tribulations and chaos.

One may even go so far as to say that this could trigger doctrinal fanaticism that, in turn, leads to accusations of apostasy, unjustified killing and the unlawful taking of property or money. This is not to say that scholars should not clarify that which is right from that which is wrong, or that which is reasonable in issues about which there is a difference of opinion; indeed, this is a necessity.

Rather, the point is that such clarifications should to be carried out by specialized scholars who refer back to the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* when disputes arise and abstain from issuing innovated verdicts (judging one to be heretical) and debauchery except according to clear, legal proofs.

How to Deal with People Who Follow Different Islamic Doctrines

It was previously mentioned that the Islamic doctrines are, in reality, schools that explain the message of Islam, serve *Sharî'ah* and teach the masses. In dealing with these doctrines, it is necessary for a Muslim to tread the path of moderation for two reasons: first, such a path is in itself the path of truth and justice brought forth by the *Sharî'ah*, and secondly, those accountable (expected to abide by Islamic law) are commanded by the Lawgiver to take the path of moderation without falling into excessiveness or negligence. Anything deviating from moderation is, therefore, regarded as blameworthy or unacceptable.

This basic principle is derived from Allah's saying:

{"And We have made you a median (i.e. just) community..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

In addition to this, the Prophet (PBUH) also said:

> *"Always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (Paradise)."*(1)

The 'moderate regular course' referred to is moderation itself. Likewise, deviation from the medium path is to deviate from justice, which disrupts peoples' interests and just as fanaticism is destructive, so too is negligence of religious matters.

Ibnul-Qayyim, may Allah's mercy be upon him, gave a well-spoken comment in which he clarified the justice and moderation of Islamic Law saying, "*Sharî'ah* is, in its entirety, the epitome of justice, welfare and wisdom, so that every issue that leaves the realm of justice for the realm of injustice or leaves the realm of mercy for that of mercilessness, the realm of benefit for that of harm, or the realm of wisdom for that of foolishness does not belong to the *Sharî'ah*, even if it is ascribed to it by means of interpretation."

Undoubtedly, Islamic Law is the middle-of-the-road with regards to creed, legislative rulings, values and morals. In addition, anyone who contemplates the sources of its rulings will infer that moderation is that which is compatible with the will of the Lawgiver and His objectives. Also, this same road of moderation is that which the Prophet (PBUH) and his successors, as well as the predecessors of this nation, adhered to.

Consequently, jurists who are at the pinnacle of those who carry out *ijtihâd* and have insight are those who call people to moderation, as opposed to extremism, severity or recklessness. The origins and sources of Islamic Law are also middle-of-the-road, so they do not burden those expected to abide by it with rulings that may cause hardship or difficulty; indeed it was revealed to alleviate such hardships. Allah says:

> ***{"There is not upon the weak or upon the ill or upon those who do not find anything to spend any discomfort (i.e. guilt) when they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is not upon the doers of good any cause (for blame). And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 91]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on Ar-Riqâq (Making Heart More Tender)

He also says:

{"And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. He [i.e. Allah] named you "Muslims" before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish prayer and give Zakâh and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector; and excellent is the Protector, and excellent is the Helper."}

[Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 78]

In another verse He says:

{"There is not on the blind any guilt or upon the lame any guilt or upon the ill any guilt (for remaining behind). And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him to gardens beneath which rivers flow; but whoever turns away – He will punish him with a grievous punishment."}

[Al-Fath (Conquest): 17]

The *Sunnah* also came to facilitate matters and to make things easier. In a long *Hadîth*, where the Prophet (PBUH) was asked about the rituals of pilgrimage, he explained:

"Do it (referring to actions that the inquirer thought were not allowable in Hajj) and there is no harm (sin)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

In a similar vein, he (PBUH) said:

"Slaughter and there is no harm in it."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

He (PBUH) also said :

"It is not sinful to kill five kinds of animals: the crow, the kite, the mouse, the scorpion and the rabid dog."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

Further, when he (PBUH) was asked about the reason behind him commanding the muezzin to say, *"Perform prayer at your home,"* instead of, *"Come to the prayer,"* he (PBUH) said:

> *"I disliked making things difficult for you by bringing you out (of your homes) to walk in the mud and slush."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bukhârî]

On another occasion when he (PBUH) was asked about combining prayers, he (PBUH) said:

> *"I did this so as not to make things difficult for my people."*
>
> [Related by At-Tabarânî]

These *Hadîths* indicate that the *Sharî'ah* prescribes making things easy so that neither transgression nor negligence occur. If Muslims follow the Glorious Qur'ân and *Sunnah* in a sound truthful manner, keeping away from interpretations that cause deviation from either of these two fundamental sources and the errors that follow from this deviation, they would not sink into excessiveness. Indeed, whenever a Muslim veers away from either of these two sources, he falls into extremism and is afflicted with weakness and (moral or ideological) illness.

Within our juristic heritage lie rules that illustrate the tolerance and easy nature of our *Sharî'ah*. Some scholars have asserted that there exist principles where easiness is the underlying objective or notion. Furthermore, such principles are not those that were developed to deal with emergency situations or to rectify harm or corruption; rather they are rules upon which legal rulings are initially based when there is no clear cut legal evidence or when the Lawgiver makes no mention of a specific course of action. One such principle, for example, is that, "That which is permissible is permissible by default, whereas that which is harmful is forbidden."

Moreover, scholars have presented many proofs from the Qur'ân, *Sunnah* and sound reasoning which state that the general rule is 'beneficial things are basically lawful'

As for the Qur'ân, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

{"Say, "Lawful for you are (all) good foods..."}

[Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 4]

'Good foods' refers to that which appeals to man naturally without the sound, inborn nature or disposition abhorring them at all. This also implies that all useful things are permitted.

Allah also says:

{"It is He who created for you all of that which is on the earth..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 29]

This verse is further proof of the principle at hand as Allah mentions it to show the graces He has bestowed upon His servants, and His graces can only be permissible.

Allah also says:

{"Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment of [i.e. from] Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?"} [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 32]

He also says:

{"Say, "I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to be eaten by one who wishes to eat it unless it be a dead animal, blood spilled out or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah..."} [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 145]

The above texts indicate that Allah, Glory be to Him, has declared permissibility as the general overlying rule and prohibition the exception.

As for proof from the *Sunnah*, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The lawful is what Allah has declared lawful in His Book; the unlawful is what Allah has declared unlawful in His Book and that which He has said nothing about is that which he has excused."

[Related by At-Tirmidhî]

This *Hadîth* clearly states that Allah has excused that which He has made no statement about, and that which is excused, is that which is lawful and neither harmful nor sinful. This, however, is only applicable to that which is beneficial since that which is harmful or detrimental is forbidden according to absolutely conclusive proofs.

It is said that this particular *Hadîth* was made in response to an inquiry about butter, cheese and furs, for which there were no specific texts. This further supports the aforementioned rule since these are not harmful products and, therefore, among that which has been excused.

Other texts have referred to the reason why the Lawgiver (Allah, Glory be to Him) made no comment regarding such matters, indicating that this itself is a form of mercy upon His servants and one of the greatest ways to make matters easy for them. In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Indeed Allah has made certain things obligatory, so do not neglect them. He has set certain limits so do not transgress them and He has said nothing about certain things out of His mercy towards you, not out of forgetfulness, so do not dig further into them."

[Related by Ad-Dârqutnî]

Because the use of that which is not mentioned harms neither the owner (of the utility sought) nor the person seeking to benefit (from the utility), such use is not prohibited. Examples of such permissible forms of benefit include benefiting from someone else's light when they have it switched on, or sitting in the shade of someone else's wall.

Equally unacceptable is to obligate people to abide by rules or principles without explaining these rules to them, since this would be an unacceptable burden and such a burden cannot be attributed to Allah. This basic principle is understood from Allah's saying:

{"And Allah would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of all things."}

[At-Tawbah (Repentance): 115]

This verse also means that Allah never judges a people as being misguided or sinful until He clarifies to them that which constitutes disobedience and deviation so that they may avoid falling into them. Of course, anything that is not considered misguided or sinful cannot be considered unlawful.

Just as it is easy to see from such texts that the rulings of the *Sharî'ah* are based on moderation and facilitation, so too it is easy to see that Islamic thought is flexible and wide enough in scope to accept different views and different opinions, regardless of that which may or may not be considered preferable or that which may or may not be considered correct.

The greatest evidence of such breadth in scope in the *Sharî'ah* is that the Prophet (PBUH) accommodated the hypocrites (in Medina) with knowledge of their intentions and lack of faith, concluded covenants with Jews and addressed kings. Also among the things that these actions signify is that Islam allows into its societies followers of other religions.

Through the ages, however, there arose reprehensible partisanships and fanatical trends that Allah did not prescribe for the followers of His *Sharî'ah*. Numerous misconceptions also developed through which the texts of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* were misinterpreted, and which ultimately resulted in rulings that contravened the rulings of Islam. Indeed, fanaticism, violence and extremism are often triggered and nurtured by verdicts given by those who associate themselves to Islam and its sciences or by high-ranking religious authorities.

Such verdicts are also issued by people who have very little legal knowledge, but are fond of their religion and the ideologies they were brought up with and hence have led themselves to believe that they were doing that which is right in issuing such verdicts or judgments.

This, then, is a good reason to look into the seriousness of religious verdicts and to understand the qualities of those who are qualified to issue them. In the Arabic language, *Fatwâ* is the act of answering someone's question. Terminologically, it refers to delineating the ruling of the *Sharî'ah* concerning an incident in response to an inquirer's question.

The gravity of a *Fatwâ* lies in the fact that it is essentially to act on behalf of Allah in making or clarifying a legal injunction. This is why the predecessors of this nation were averse to giving hasty verdicts and sought that their companions relieve them of such a responsibility by issuing verdicts instead of them.

Abû Is<u>h</u>âq Al-Hamadânî narrated that Al-Barâ' Ibn `Âzib, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I found that each of the three hundred men who participated in the Battle of Badr was keen to avoid issuing *Fatwâs*." Further, Abû Yûsuf, the companion of Abû <u>H</u>anîfah, was reported to have said, "I heard Abû <u>H</u>anîfah say, 'But for my fear of Allah and that knowledge should be lost, I would have never issued a *Fatwâ*; (since while) he (the asker) may be pleased with my *Fatwâ*, (it is) I who will bear its responsibility.' "

From this, the role of a *Muftî* (i.e. he who issues religious verdicts) becomes clear within the Islamic society; as it is he who clarifies, in his *Fatwâ*, the ruling of Allah when he says that such and such a matter is lawful and declares another matter to be unlawful. Ibnul-Qayyim described the *Muftîs* and their role when he said, "They are on earth as the stars are in the sky; they guide the bewildered in the darkness. People need them more than they need food and drink and obedience to them is a greater duty than obedience to one's parents."

Issuing *Fatwâs* is a collective duty as there must always be scholars among Muslims who show the people the rulings of their religion concerning incidents that arise. This, however, is not a duty that everyone can assume, since the scholar assigned to such a task must be able and competent in this regard.

Scholars qualified to issue verdicts are obligated by Islamic law to issue them, as concealing knowledge is prohibited, Allah says:

> ***{"And (mention, O Mu<u>h</u>ammad), when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, [saying], "You must make it clear to the people and not conceal it."}***
>
> [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 187]

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

> *"Whoever is asked about his knowledge and hides it, then a bridle made of fire will be tied around his mouth on the Day of Resurrection."*
>
> [Related by At-Tirmidhî]

The author of the book, *'Nihâyatul-Muhtâj'* said, "It is a collective duty to establish scientific arguments, resolve religious problems, deal with matters that cast doubt, learn the sciences of *Sharî'ah*, such as exegesis and *Hadîth*, as well as its juristic branches, such as jurisdiction and the science of issuing *Fatwâs*, because of the dire need for these sciences."

Consequently, anyone qualified to give *Fatwâs* is to be knowledgeable, pious, righteous, chaste, of good reputation, well-behaved, lenient and able to consult with other scholars. The mufti must also be well-informed in order to serve both the public and private interests of the nation along with the aid of those who are experienced and able to make decisions with regards to contemporary events. This is so that he may perceive current issues and existing trends in a manner that allows him to issue accurate verdicts.

His approach to issuing *Fatwâs* is to be based on proper evidence and the objectives of the *Sharî'ah* while taking into consideration the previously discussed principle of facilitation. The jurist who makes people's religious and worldly affairs difficult will not be successful, and he who is overly severe in matters regarding dealings and actions of people is he who lacks juristic knowledge. This is because juristic knowledge is that which makes things easier while meeting the objectives of the Lawgiver, and not that which makes things difficult.

Ath-Thawrî, may Allah's mercy be upon him, said, "*Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) is not the act of being stringent; rather, *Fiqh* is the ability to make exceptions with confidence, as stringency is something anyone is capable of."

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) commanded the Companions whom he dispatched to give *Fatwâs* and to judge among people to be facilitative and to make things easy, rather than inflict hardship, saying:

"Indeed, you (Muslims) are sent to facilitate things for people, not to make them difficult."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

There exist a number of other juristic principles geared towards facilitation and that are compatible with the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Such principles include, 'hardship is to be alleviated through ease' or 'when a matter becomes difficult, it is to be made easy' or the principle that declares that 'a detriment is to be removed'.

All these rules are set for the eradication of inconvenience for the people.

Facilitation, however, is not the guiding principle in all affairs or rulings. Rather, it requires that certain conditions be met before it may be embraced as the over-riding principle. These conditions include:

1. That it be the objective of the Lawgiver. If, however, the Lawgiver's objective is seen to be strictness, such as for the purposes of deterrence and in order to scold, facilitation will only debilitate efforts to deter. Further, facilitation does not aim at leading people to indulgence and the negligence of rulings, morals and constants of religion. Rather, the objective is to remove hardships and encourage adherence to the injunctions of the *Sharî'ah*.
2. That there exists a real and genuine hardship. This is because facilitation is triggered by hardships according to the juristic principle, 'hardship is a cause for facilitation', but not every hardship deserves facilitation. Hardships associated with habits or acts of worship are those that can be alleviated, whereas those which are not associated with such habits or acts can not.

   Based on this, it is possible to divide hardships into two categories:

   a. Hardships that people normally bear and tolerate such as those caused by fasting, pilgrimage, paying *Zakâh* and the remaining legal obligations. These are bearable, lawful hardships that are not aimed at straining people; rather they bring about benefits and are not considered an overburden since no legal obligation is an overburden and all such obligations come with benefits, even if it be the simple

notion of training the self to forsake that which is forbidden for that which is lawful. Indeed, if all obligations were purely facile, there would not be a single sinner or violator in existence.

Religious obligations are, therefore, not designed to place people in difficulty; instead it is through them that interests in this world and the next are achieved.

Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm states that, "We have come to understand, through different sources and origins, that the intent of the *Sharî'ah* is to realize people's worldly and religious interests, and that hardship is not an interest in itself, but a form of pain that may entail inconvenience in the same way that a doctor may prescribe bitter medicine with the intention of curing his patient. To suggest that the doctor's aim was to create discomfort through prescribing such bitter medicine is something that would not be befitting of a scholar who is sincere in his intention of helping to improve people's lives or doing that which is best."

Hence, this form of difficulty or hardship is not that which is in need of alleviation and is not included under the juristic principle mentioned above.

b. Hardships that people are normally unable to endure except through the exertion of enormous efforts or that cannot be endured except through the detriment to one's self, property or at the expense of being able to perform routine tasks. To burden anyone with this form of hardship is legally unacceptable. Moreover, this form of burden is incompatible with the objectives of the *Sharî'ah* and it is for this kind of hardship that alleviation or facilitation is acceptable and required.

From that mentioned above, we can see that issuing *Fatwâs* plays a significant role in the guidance of the nation, individuals and groups with regards to religious, intellectual, cultural and sociological matters.

It, therefore, follows that if such verdicts are issued by knowledgeable and confident scholars who are righteous and pious, the impact of their verdicts will be positive on the nation which, in turn, aids the prevalence of tolerance, peace, coexistence and mutual respect.

If, however, verdicts are issued by those who wrongfully ascribe themselves as having knowledge and distort and misinterpret the texts of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, they will definitely drive the nation to difficulty. In addition to this, the accusations of religious deviation (by people who claim to be knowledgeable) and the use of violence and extremism will serve to worsen the Islamic society and lead to doctrinal fanaticism and sectarianism, which are the most dangerous diseases that undermine a nation and sow the seeds of dissension and hatred among its members.

Such a situation will also lead those who hold extremist views to use force in the actualization of their views and principles.

The perpetrators of such actions rely on secrecy when plotting and executing their plans. Also, in deriving pretexts for their actions, they usually depend on *Fatwâs* related to such issues as enjoining good and forbidding evil, *Jihâd*, and judging by other than that which Allah revealed. While there is no doubt that these matters are basic and fundamental issues in religion, as revealed to us through the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, it is, however, the interpretation and means of implementation of such issues that require the wisdom of well-versed scholars who are able to place rulings in their proper context and understand the objectives of the *Sharî'ah* and religious texts, and the interests of the nation.

The Islamic nation continues to be afflicted by flimsy inexperienced individuals who allege to be knowledgeable and issue *Fatwâs* (legal opinions) without sound knowledge and a thorough understanding of reality. The nation is also afflicted with scholars who distort the meanings of legal texts to conform to the whims of rulers. Indeed, some of their statements and legal opinions have gone so far as to provoke the sentiments of the Islamic nation and cause widespread anger. So, just as the former group has not acted correctly, the latter has not acted well and soundly either.

Going to either extreme on the sides of an issue is unacceptable and blameworthy, as is alluded to by the following verse from a poem:

Don't go too far in a matter but be moderate.

For going to either extreme in a matter is dispraised.

Owing to the fact that the three aforementioned issues are those most commonly discussed and used as pretexts by those who are ignorant in order to be extreme and violent, and declare others as infidels or the use of explosive devices and what not, it might be wise for us to clarify the correct juristic view of such matters as dictated by the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* as well as the views of outspoken, pious scholars.

The practice of enjoining good and forbidding evil may be a social responsibility carried out at an individual or societal level, depending on the requirements of a given situation. It may also be an administrative responsibility carried out by the state for the sake of public interest, the establishment of welfare and justice, and the prevention of harm and malevolence taking shape in the society.

Both Qur'ân and *Sunnah* affirm the legality of enjoining good and forbidding evil. The Glorious Qur'ân signifies its legality in various ways, sometimes prescribing it explicitly while other times describing it as being an attribute of the believers.

The Qur'ân also declares it to be one of the causes that brings about the benevolence of this nation and states that one of the purposes of assuming power and dominion over the earth is its implementation. Allah says:

> ***{"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful."}***
>
> [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 104]

In another verse, Allah says:

> ***{"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer..."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 71]

Allah also says:

> ***{"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah..."}*** [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 110]

These and other verses clarify that enjoining good and forbidding evil is an imperative that must be fulfilled because it leads to Allah bestowing victory to Muslims and is the discerning factor between the believers and the hypocrites. These verses also indicate that abandoning this duty is a cause of Allah's wrath and curse, and that the rectitude and benevolence of this nation depend upon carrying out this duty.

The *Sunnah* has also referred to the legality of enjoining good and forbidding evil, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"He who amongst you sees something abominable should change it with his hand; and if he cannot do so, then he should change it with his tongue, and if he cannot do so, then he should change it by (abominating it in) his heart; and that is the least (part) of Faith."*
>
> [Related by Ahmad, Muslim, Abû Dâwûd, At-Tirmidhî, An-Nasâ'î and Ibn Mâjah]

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

> *"By the One in Whose Hand is my soul! You (must) enjoin good and forbid evil, or Allah will send a punishment from Him upon you; you will then supplicate Him, but He will not answer your supplication."*
>
> [Related by At-Tirmidhî]

It is apparent from the Prophet's (PBUH) *Sunnah* that it is imperative to enjoin good and forbid evil and, further, that it is an aspect of belief. The abovementioned *Hadîths* also indicate that the least degree of this duty is to abhor and decry in one's heart that which is wrong (meaning to feel distraught by it).

Also apparent is that when this duty is abandoned or when no one is designated to undertake it, trials and tribulations will befall everyone and they will not be limited to those who were responsible for the transgression or those who openly committed the sin.

The act of relaying the message of Islam, its creed, law, morality and manners, comes under the general heading of enjoining good and forbidding evil.

For the above-mentioned reasons, part of the wisdom behind the legality and the enforcement of this duty are to protect oneself against the punishment of Allah and to be able to invoke His mercy. Indeed, public acts of disobedience and carrying out prohibitions openly as well as perpetrating abominable actions are the main reasons that cause Allah to unleash His torture and punishment upon infidels, the sinful and to take revenge of those who openly violate His laws.

This is the way of Allah with His creatures. Allah says:

> ***{"Those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed. They used not to prevent one another from wrongdoings that they did. How wicked were their actions."}***
>
> [Al-Mā'idah (The Table): 78, 79]

It is manifest from the Qur'anic texts that Allah became angry with the Children of Israel and cursed them in both the Psalms and the Gospels. Moreover, Prophet David cursed those who transgressed the Sabbath and those who were disobedient as a whole. Similarly, Prophet Jesus cursed them because of their continued disobedience, their excessiveness in committing sins, their turning away from the obedience of Allah, their excessive injustice, their corruption and their aggression. Nor did the children of Israel prevent one another from committing abominable acts, no matter how grotesque or grievous such acts were.

In Allah's religion, forbidding evil is a token of belief, a means of protecting morality and manners, a way of guarding virtues and a way in which vices and corruption may be defeated or suppressed. It is, however, equally important that those who carry out this duty be those who hold authority, or public officials appointed for such tasks, or those capable of saving someone from harm without bringing additional harm to themselves. All of this, of course, necessitates knowledge of legal jurisprudence and a precise understanding of affairs.

Indeed, the fanatic may be regarded as one who is provoked into committing acts of violence by the abominations he witnesses and the lack of understanding in how to decry them. Nor does he know what his legal duties are in such instances. Indeed, he may be among those who should decry that which is evil with only their hearts; but resorts to decrying it by force or by using words, thereby causing distress in both his worldly and religious affairs.

The scholars have outlined the instances as well as the individuals upon whom enjoining good and forbidding evil is an individual duty:

1. Rulers and the associates appointed by rulers, for they are legally charged with this authority. They are to be obeyed (in a way that is best) and it is they who possess authority and are legally and lawfully empowered. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

   {"[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish Prayer and give Zakâh and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters."} [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 41]

2. Those who are in a position where they, alone, know that which is right from that which is wrong and they, alone, are able to rectify a situation or do away with an abomination. Such people include husbands and fathers, for instance. Others may be those who know that their directives or opinions will be accepted or heard due to their scientific or social status or any other qualifications that results in others obeying them. On this point, Imâm An-Nawawî said, "Then it becomes imperative to do so (enjoin good and forbid evil) such as is the case with those who are in a position where they alone know that which is right from that which is wrong or they alone have the ability to stop that which is wrong, such as he who sees his wife or child doing wrong or neglecting to perform that which is good."

Also under this category are those who are capable of debating and presenting arguments, since this is regarded as a manner of advising about matters in the religion. Just as it is important to decry those doing wrong, it is also mandatory that those who do not perform religious duties, without

a just reason, are to be admonished for their neglect. Ibn Al-`Arabî said, "Enjoining good and forbidding evil may be an individual duty if one is aware, himself, that he is capable of debating or arguing independently, or if he is known for this characteristic."

Ishâq said, "I asked Abû `Abdullah, namely Imâm Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, 'When must I enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong?' He replied, 'When you are not afraid of a whip or a stick (meaning being exposed to torture or harm).' "

It is worth noting that enjoining right and forbidding wrong can be an individual duty for one who is not normally qualified to do so. This involves the act of rescuing someone from destruction, if this is possible without causing harm to oneself. An example of this is one who sees a person assault another with a weapon. If he sees that the person holding the weapon is about to do harm or kill another, and if he is able to take the weapon away from him, it becomes obligatory for him to do so. Similarly, one is to resist any form of assault made against himself or someone else as this is a form of cooperation required by and praised by the *Sharî`ah*, and to abandon such an obligation is considered detestable by both the *Sharî`ah* and man's natural disposition.

It is mandatory upon everyone to decry in the heart any abhorrent, for that is the least degree of faith, and the claim that one is unable to decry in the heart that which is abhorrent is inexcusable. The Prophet (PBUH) is reported to have said:

> *"He who amongst you sees something abominable should change it with his hand; and if he cannot do so, then he should change it with his tongue, and if he cannot do so, then he should change it by (abominating it in) his heart; and that is the least (part) of Faith."*
>
> [Related by Ahmad, Muslim, Abû Dâwûd, At-Tirmidhî, An-Nasâ'î and Ibn Mâjah]

He who does not decry in his heart that which is wrong is lacking in faith as what lies in the heart is known only to Allah. To abhor in the heart that which is wrong is, hence, imperative upon every individual.

There are a number of set conditions that are to be met by the person who assumes the office of *Ihtisâb* (an office assumed by a chief entrusted with the superintendence of public affairs such as observing prices and the maintenance of morality in an Islamic country). The most important of these conditions is knowledge, since he who enjoins good and forbids evil must be knowledgeable with regards to that which he enjoins or prohibits and he who has no knowledge is unqualified and cannot be authorized for such a duty. Allah, Exalted be He, says,

{"Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"}

[Az-Zumar (The Hordes): 9]

Ibn Juzayy stated, "The *Muhtasib* (a person who takes charge of *Ihtisâb*) must meet certain conditions: It is necessary that he be a sane, adult Muslim capable of *Ihtisâb* and knowledgeable of that which he is charged with. He must also be sure that his forbiddance of evil will not lead to an act that is worse than the original sin, such as he who prevents someone from drinking alcohol by killing him. He should also be sure or nearly sure that his forbiddance of evil will actually bring the evil to an end and that his compulsion to do good will be effective."[1]

Knowledge, with respect to the *Muhtasib*, is the knowledge of what he enjoins or forbids as dictated by his particular job. When the Islamic scholars stipulated that the *Muhtasib* be knowledgeable of the injunctions of the *Sharî'ah*, they meant that what he enjoined was to be that which is considered allowable according to the *Sharî'ah* while that which he forbade was to be that which is considered unlawful. Further, they also stipulated that the unlawfulness of such a forbidden matter be a matter of consensus among scholars. Such a condition, of course, is only a characteristic of he who is well-versed in the rulings of the *Sharî'ah*. The *Muhtasib* charged with superintending such things as public morality, health, matters of hygiene or market affairs, on the other hand, is to be well-informed of the principles of his particular job and aware of the limits of his specialty as stipulated by the system in effect.

(1) *Al-Qawânîn Al-Fiqhiyyah* (The Juristic Verdicts) by Ibn Juzayy, p. 368.

The *Muhtasib* is also to be appointed by the ruler or by someone with the authority to give him permission to carry out his task. This last stipulation is rendered disputable by jurists, and after considering the different views, it would appear that a closer look is necessary. One view suggests that prior permission is necessary for the *Muhtasib* to be appointed to particular tasks. This permission will dictate their areas of specialization, the kind of work they do, the kind of verification they undertake, the degree to which their statements are to be abided by or the degree of their authority, the legal cases they undertake and their capacity to impose fines on lawbreakers.

However, this view maintains that if the issue concerns enjoining good that has been abandoned openly or forbidding evil that is being openly perpetrated, and as long as the *Muhtasib* sees that he will not jeopardize his safety, he is not required to be given authority for such tasks.

They state that this is because the basic principle is that all Muslims are burdened with the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding evil. Allah, Glory be to Him, says,

> ***{"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer..."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 71]

In our view, permission is required in either of the two cases, especially with regards to that which is related to public affairs, in order that there may be some guidelines and orderliness. This will also serve to prevent unwarranted transgression against the rights of others as well as avert those who seek to cause tribulations and create anarchy in the society. This is particularly true given the fact that enjoining good and forbidding evil is not something everyone is capable of doing or capable of doing well. Further, such a task must be carried out by one who is competent, well-experienced, aware of the current circumstances, capable of estimating that which is required to achieve the desired interests, and able to select the appropriate statements, use the appropriate manners and understand the legal dimensions so as to act according to the *Sharī'ah*.

Transgressing legal limits and established fundamentals only brings more evil, violence, anarchy and bloodshed to the society. This is why Mus-

lims should be keener than others in their desire to resort to specialists and to operate through known, reliable, public institutions in their efforts to rectify wrongdoings in the society. This will then lead to the spread of trust, compliance, and adherence to laws and regulations.

We cannot deny that the spread of that which is evil or that the unbounded freedom of those who perpetrate debauchery and corruption, as well as the continued confinement and persecution of those seeking to rectify and enjoin that which is right may aggravate and motivate the reckless to commit acts of foolishness that ultimately wind up harming the image of religion and of the pious.

It is, therefore, necessary that states and societies deal with these instigating causes at religious, legal, social and moral levels through fixed standards of justice and fairness so that the manifestations of extremism and violence may be avoided or suppressed.

Jihâd (Fighting in the Cause of Allah)

Jihâd is the pinnacle of Islam. Mu`âdh Ibn Jabal was reported to have narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"The essential element of the matter is Islam, its pillar is prayer, and its pinnacle is Jihâd."*[1]

[Related by At-Tirmidhî]

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî in his Sunan by this wording. At-Tirmidhî said, "This is a *Hasan Sahîh Hadîth*." He narrated on the authority of Mu`âdh Ibn Jabal that he said: "I was with Allah's Messenger (PBUH) on a journey. One morning, walking near him, I said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, tell me of a deed that would cause me to be admitted to the Paradise and keep me away from the Hellfire.' He (PBUH) said, 'You have asked me about a matter of great importance; however, it is so easy for whomever Allah has made it easy: Worship Allah and do not associate anything with Him, perform prayer, pay the *Zakâh*, fast the month of Ramadân and perform pilgrimage to the (sacred) House *(Ka`bah)*.' Then, he said, 'Should I not direct you to the gateways of good? Fasting is a shield against evil, charity extinguishes a sin (i.e., frees the sinner from the punishment of Hellfire for such sin) just as water extinguishes fire, and man's prayer during the middle of the night.' Then the Prophet (PBUH) recited, *'Their sides forsake their beds, to invoke their Lord'* until he reached, *'What they used to do...'* Then he (PBUH) said, 'Should I not inform you about the essential element of the matter, its pillar and its top?' I said, 'Yes, O Allah's Messenger.' The Prophet said, 'The essential element of the matter is Islam, its pillar is prayer, and its top is *Jihâd*.' He then said, 'Should I not tell you about the core of =

The reality of *Jihâd* is that it is a means of bringing about the prevalence of Allah's commands on earth by the use of all available material and spiritual means, and to establish safety and security in human societies. This is not least because the struggle between truth and falsehood, or good and evil, is ongoing, rendering necessary the resistance of evil and tyranny in every day and age. *Jihâd* was legislated even in earlier nations. Allah says,

> ***{"And how many a prophet [fought and] with him fought many religious scholars. But they never lost assurance due to what afflicted them in the cause of Allah, nor did they weaken or submit. And Allah loves the steadfast."}***
>
> [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 146]

Jihâd is obligatory in three cases

1. If a Muslim and non-Muslim army meet in battle, it is mandatory for those attending the battle to fight and in this instance, leaving the battle field is prohibited. Allah says,

   {"O you who have believed, when you encounter a company [from the enemy forces], stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful."} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 45]

   Allah also says,

   {"O you who have believed, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing [for battle], do not turn to them your backs [in flight]. And whoever turns his back to them on such a day, unless swerving [as a strategy] for war or joining [another] company, has certainly returned with anger [upon him] from Allah, and his refuge is Hell - and wretched is the destination."}

   [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 15, 16]

= all this?' I said, 'Yes O Messenger of Allah.' He (PBUH) took hold of his tongue and said, 'Control this.' I said, 'O Messenger of Allah, would we be accountable for what we say?' Thereupon, he (PBUH) said, 'O Mu'âdh, may your mother lose you. Is there anything else other than the produce of people's tongues that causes them to be thrown into the Hellfire upon their faces or on their noses?'"

2. If a Muslim country is attacked by an enemy, fighting for and the defense of this country becomes obligatory since this is a means of resisting injustice and protecting property as well as honor.
3. If the ruler, or he who is vested with authority, calls for *Jihâd*, fighting becomes incumbent on those who are summoned, Allah says:

   {"O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of Allah, you adhere heavily to the earth? Are you satisfied with the life of this world rather than the Hereafter? But what is the enjoyment of worldly life compared to the Hereafter except a [very] little. If you do not go forth, He will punish you with a painful punishment and will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. And Allah is over all things competent."}

   [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 38, 39]

   Such calls are made when Muslim lands are encroached upon. Allah has legislated for us the resistance of aggressors by saying,

   {"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors."}

   [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 190]

   He also says,

   {"...So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you..."}

   [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 194]

   This is regarded as the elimination of oppression and injustice which is inflicted upon Muslims. In another verse, Allah says,

   {"Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is Competent to give them victory."} [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 39]

   Fighting, however, should be carried out under the authority of the law and waged by a legitimate ruler. Because the aims of *Jihâd* include the implementation of Allah's commands, the implementation of

justice, the spread of welfare among people and the confinement of authority and dominion to Allah alone, it is Allah's guidance that is to be sought alone to achieve this, and it is His laws alone that are to be abided by. For this reason, *Jihâd* or combat is very seldom mentioned without being associated with the phrase 'in the cause of Allah'. This, of course, is so that the difference between *Jihâd* and fighting for the sake of worldly gains, revenge, sovereignty or the enslavement of others may be made clear.

Jihâd is not about the annihilation of life, whether it be the life of human beings, plants or animals, nor is it about the spread of destruction and ruin; rather, *Jihâd* aims to bring about happiness, peace and guidance for humanity as well as the spread of safety and prosperity. *Jihâd* is, therefore, not just to fight with one's body but with one's words and property as well.

Allah has multiplied the reward of those who practice *Jihâd* with their bodies, words and properties by saying,

{"Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment."}

[At-Tawbah (Repentance): 111]

Without doubt, the status of *Jihâd* in Islam is grand, but it is necessary for those wishing to carry it out to prepare for it, as Allah says,

{"And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged."} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 60]

It is also necessary for those who intend to practice *Jihâd* to be firm in their intention, to obey those in authority and to not indulge in arguing and disagreement between themselves regardless of the results, Allah says:

> ***{"O you who have believed, when you encounter a company [from the enemy forces], stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful. And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."}*** [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 45, 46]

It is also important that the *Mujâhidûn* (Muslim soldiers) personify Islamic morals and adhere to the laws revealed to the best of human beings (Prophet Muhammad PBUH) when confronting the enemy. Whenever the Prophet (PBUH) appointed a leader over an army or a brigade, he would personally advise the leader to fear Allah and treat his followers kindly. He would then say to him,

> *"Fight in the Name of Allah and in His Cause against those who disbelieve in Allah. Fight (the disbelievers), and do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; do not mutilate (the dead body) and do not kill children."*[1]
>
> [Related by Muslim]

The Rightly-Guided Caliph, Abû Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) would advise his soldiers by saying, "You will meet people who claim to have dedicated themselves to Allah (meaning to His worship), so leave them and let them do what they claim to be doing; and do not kill women, boys or old men ..."[2]

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(1) Related by Muslim, the book of "*Jihâd* and Biographies".

(2) Rulings of the Qur'ân, Vol. 1, p. 104. Imâm Mâlik related in his book "*Al-Mudawwanah*" (The Compilation) that Abû Bakr As-Siddîq (may Allah be pleased with him) sent an army to Ash-Shâm (The Levant; the region covering Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine). He went on walking along with Yazîd Ibn Abû Sufyân (may Allah be pleased with him) and gave him ten pieces of advice. In another narration of this *Hadîth* in "*Al-Muwatta'* ", Imâm Mâlik narrated on the authority of Yahya Ibn Sa'îd that Abû Bakr As-Siddîq sent armies to Ash-Shâm. Upon leaving, Abû Bakr went on walking along with Yazîd Ibn Abû Sufyân who was one of the four leaders of the armies. They said =

In spite the presence of clear, unequivocal texts from the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, as well as the biographies of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs demonstrating the rules and guidelines for *Jihâd* and that it is to be carried out under the legal banner of a ruler who calls for it according to the interests of Islam and Muslims, we continue to see those who infringe on the injunctions of the *Sharî'ah* concerning this issue.

These are people who interpret the Qur'anic texts according to their own personal whims and opinions, taking matters out of context and manipulating them, resulting in accusations of apostasy, which in turn result in violence and the wrongful seizure of property under the pretext that it is property that belongs to an enemy or an apostate whom it is lawful to kill.

It is under such pretexts that killings and the sabotage and destruction of public property or inviolable wealth and lives are carried out and alleged to be acts of *Jihâd*. This, no doubt, is a result of the lack of understanding of the legal injunctions pertaining to this issue as well as others.

It is true that *Jihâd* will continue to be in effect until the Day of Resurrection and that no one can belittle the importance of *Jihâd* and of the *Mujâhidûn* or describe them as vandals. Also no one can describe *Jihâd* itself as a desire to spill blood or to confiscate the property of others. This is because true *Jihâd* and the *Mujâhidûn*, who abide by the rules of the *Sharî'ah* that pertain to *Jihâd*, never commit acts such as the sabotage of public property or the killing of innocent people.

= that Yazîd said to Abû Bakr, "Either you ride on or I will dismount..." Abû Bakr said, "Neither will you dismount nor will I mount, for I hope that my steps be counted as being in the Cause of Allah." Then, Abû Bakr said to Yazîd, "You will find some people who claim that they have confined themselves for the Sake of Allah, so leave them to their claims. You will also find other people in whose heads Satan has settled, so cut these heads off with swords. I am giving you ten pieces of advice: (1) Do not kill a woman, (2) a boy, (3) or an aged person, (4) nor cut out productive trees, (5) nor destroy populated areas, (6) nor slaughter a lamb or a camel except for eating, (7) nor destroy bees with fire (8) nor with water, (9) nor take illegally a part of booty, (10) nor show cowardice."

Sadly, such acts are committed by those who do not understand the jurisprudence behind *Jihâd* in the cause of Allah and so they do what they do and continue to tarnish the very name of *Jihâd* and that of the real *Mujâhidûn*. It is, therefore, necessary that the rulings and conditions of *Jihâd* be made known to the public, since adherence to these rulings is a prerequisite to victory and the assumption of power.

To Rule by other than that which Allah has Revealed (i.e. other than Allah's Laws)

One of the reasons that Allah, Glory be to Him, revealed the *Sharî'ah* unto this nation was to use it to settle any disputes and disagreements that may arise. Further, anyone judging between two sides is not allowed to adjudicate with anything that lies in contrast to Allah's laws, whether those in dispute with each other are Muslims or non-Muslims. It is indeed regrettable to see those who do not believe that judging by what Allah has revealed to His Prophet (PBUH) is mandatory or obligatory; for it is not permissible to judge property, honor or blood by laws that oppose the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. Rather, all civil and penal codes must be derived from Allah's *Sharî'ah*, for He is the Lord of all the worlds.

The issue of abstaining from judging by the Islamic Law is something that has been researched by both previous and current scholars; and their conclusions may be summarized into the following three cases:

1. He who does not rule by that which Allah has revealed alleging its invalidity, denying its legitimacy, disdaining it or claiming it to be false is an apostate.
2. He who does not rule by that which Allah has revealed due to his own whims and desires is judged to be sinful, but is not excluded from the scope of Islam as long as he believes that the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is more perfect and more complete than anything else.
3. He who does not rule by that which Allah has revealed with the intention of doing injustice to one who is being judged or to avail one who is seeking a verdict is an unjust oppressor and not an apostate[1].

(1) *At-Tahrîr wa At-Tanwîr* (Liberation and Enlightenment), Vol. 2 p. 143.

Sheikh Muhammad Al-`Uthaymîn, may Allah have mercy on him, explained, "He who abstains from ruling by what Allah has revealed (Islamic *Sharî`ah*), deriding it, disdaining it or believing that other laws are more valid and useful for the people, has fallen into a degree of disbelief that takes him beyond the pale of Islam... He who does not judge according to what Allah has revealed, without deriding it, disdaining it or believing that other laws might be more useful than it, but instead, does so in order to cause harm to the person being ruled against or to avenge himself against him, etc...is unjust and not an apostate. The degree of his injustice will then depend on the judgments he passes and the means used to pass them. Also, he who does not judge according to what Allah has revealed without deriding it, disdaining it or believing that other laws might be more useful than it, but instead does so as a kind of favor to whom the ruling is in favor of, as in the case of a bribe or other worldly gains, is an evil transgressor and not an apostate. The degree of his transgression will vary depending on the judgments he has passed and the means used to pass them."(1)

The Remedy

The phenomena of extremism and violence that have emerged among Muslims are attributable to reasons that must be addressed if we are to end the manifestations of extremism in the Muslim world, or at least minimize them. Indeed, far from extremism and violence, Islam calls for dialogue and debate in a way that is best, and that is based on amicability, allowing for liberty that is tolerant of differences of opinion and that does not lead to animosity or hatred.

The remedy for such phenomena may take several forms depending on the nature of the factors that instigate extremism and violence. These forms are as follows:

1. **To leave the door open for those who desire to return to the straight path** and abandon extremist groups. Moreover, the dialogue with these elements is to be calm and scientific, taking into account their cultural, religious and personal backgrounds so that the dialogue may be fruitful.

(1) *Fatwâs* and Messages, Vol. 2, p. 143.

2. **To strengthen the role of religious institutions,** as religion is the main factor behind guiding people to the path of good and protecting them from evil. This role encompasses the following points:

   a. To give more thought and consideration to the issue of legal *iftâ'* (issuing verdicts). The role of the mufti is one that has contributed to the rescue of Islamic societies from major civilization crises and critical social problems. So, a trustworthy *Fatwâ* issued by a mufti who seeks the truth, justice and the nation's interests is still the most effective approach for dealing with problems as they arise and the current situation.

   b. Among the tasks of religious institutions is preaching and guidance, for which the main arena is the mosque. None can ignore the considerable role that mosques play in affecting both the general public as well as select groups. It goes without saying that when an Imâm or lecturer of a given mosque has more knowledge, or has a more refined methodology and manner, people will respond to him more quickly and more effectively.

   In order for mosques to be centers of religious, cultural and civilized education from which enlightenment may radiate, they should be provided with Imâms who are competent, having a high level of knowledge, jurisprudence, mannerisms and experience with regards to the realities facing people. This is not in the least because it is they who undertake the task of enjoining good and forbidding evil and that this can only be carried out based on the methodology of the *Sharî'ah,* as mentioned previously.

   c. Religious institutions should verify and clarify the course of moderation, as well as remedy excessiveness, extremism and doctrinal fanaticism, by the use of sensible scientific dialogue that is far removed from provocation, contempt or the attempts to monopolize the truth.

   Further, they should strive to revive the sense of religious sanctity among the individuals in a society. All of this requires sincerity and the desire to carry out these actions purely for the sake of

Allah. Indications of such sincerity include submission to the Qur'anic and Prophetic texts, the avoidance of that which causes tribulations and lapses, having pure intentions to bring the truth to light, and the ability to think highly of people and allow them the benefit of any doubt. These factors, along with others, help the nation to unite as well as circulate amity, affinity and mutual respect among Muslims. Such factors also reaffirm the inviolability and reverence of blood, and the perils of accusing rulers and societies with apostasy on the mere pretext of committing sins.

3. **Domestic Reform:** This refers to rectifying the internal situation within all countries (Islamic nations) and to allow preaching as well as to refrain from restricting those who preach in a legitimate way and in accordance with the interests of the nation. Such rectification entails the following dimensions:

a. The reformation of governmental systems

This is to implement a system of government that conforms to the *Shari'ah*, and to demand the rulers that they implement the Laws of Allah and cease judging by that which lies in contrast to them. It is also to stop discriminating between members of a given society and to renounce bias and tyranny. Also, security apparatuses are to stop persecuting the innocent, confiscating liberties and exercising violence against the advocates of reformation. Indeed, as well as being due to misconceptions or fanatical interpretations of some texts of the *Shari'ah*, extremism and violence may also be attributable to the resentful attitudes of some countries and societies towards the practices and methods of their devout youth. One might even go so far as to say that many of those in charge of official cultural, media and educational institutions view Islam as an invalid religion and are unconvinced of its values and rulings.

Equally regrettable is that such officials go so far as to show disdain and disgust for the devout who adhere to the teachings of Islam and call for the implementation of its laws. Among the reasons that lead many youths to adopt fanatic ideas and extreme

thoughts is the attempts to exclude and expunge Islam and its noble values from the domains of media, culture and thought, as well as the attempts to deprive the advocates of reformation of participation in religious activities. It is, therefore, imperative that public reform and general cleansing (of the reasons behind the corruption) be made.

b. The alleviation of poverty and deprivation

This may be actualized through the distribution of national wealth in a manner that is fair and just as well as by fighting corruption and the plundering of public property. In addition to this, equal opportunity employment that is far removed from sectarian, ethnic or partisan biases should also be made available. Further, the financial rulings of the *Sharî'ah* are to be executed, including the enforcement of *Zakâh*, both in terms of making sure that it is paid and also making sure that it is distributed among those who deserve it. Health care and education should also be provided for those in need so that each individual within the society may attain a sense of liberty and lead an honorable life.



Contemporary Violence in Arab and Muslim Nations



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The public property, management practices, administrative and financial corruption, increased social injustice, violation of individual rights, upper-class's excessive influence and lower-class's feelings of socioeconomic deprivation are all factors that have caused and heightened violence and extremism as a phenomenon.

Introduction

I greatly appreciate Qatar's Research and Studies Center for their high concern in studying violence-related extremism and its effects on our communities. I hope that Allah will give success to the participants in this theoretical study and help them produce a very authentic, highly skilled work on this phenomenon.

The importance of research centers is tangibly felt when problems occur. They should be so objective that they tackle the problems no matter what the consequences may be and adopt a scientific approach far from the misrepresentations of the media, which, unfortunately, occur often in our region.

I would like to thank you for inviting me to participate and point out my perspectives about this phenomenon. I must admit that I did my best and used all my experience to put my views on paper. Nothing in the last few weeks took my time and concern more than this task. If you notice some frankness in my writing, this is just to disclose the whole truth.

Here, in my discourse, I am very careful not to be affected by any irrelevant influences, and it is based on a high awareness and continuous tracking of the phenomenon under question.

At the end of this introduction, I highly recommend that you go beyond theoretical proposals by following-up this publication with serious practical actions, based on objective, well-documented studies that will hopefully be obtained on every aspect of the phenomenon. It is indispensable that studies should be based on authentic resources and avoid outside influences that bring undesired results. After this a detailed, practical program should be developed which outlines procedures for a solution. Every decision maker concerned with the phenomenon of violence should take part in this.

Indispensable Preliminary Statements

Postulates

Here are some self-evident postulates about the truth of terrorism:

- Extremism and immoderation are natural features of any human community. Permissiveness is a human characteristic, too.
- Current violence and terrorism are a global phenomenon that is not restricted to a specific religion or community.
- Human phenomena are very complex and interlocking. They are affected by the circumstances of each community and its interactions with other nations and environments. So it would be an unfavorable oversimplification to look at one factor and leave out others.
- The violence phenomenon is the product of a reality that results from several factors and in which components and responsibilities overlap.
- Excessiveness and violence in non-Muslim nations is a tangible and omnipresent phenomenon in their political, cultural and social lives. Seeds of conflict are deep-rooted in both the old and new Western mentality (Huntington).

Some Obvious Aspects of Violence in Western Communities

- Group suicides such as the events that happened in the U.S.A. years ago.
- Armed militias that oppose the government are found in many Western nations.
- Instances of armed violence in schools, public gatherings and among rival companies.
- Massive explosions such as the Oklahoma bombing.
- Terrorist political networks in several Asian and European nations.
- Mafia activities and drug trafficking, which are a Western phenomena.

On the other hand, instances of excessiveness and violence in the Muslim community only occur in certain temporal and regional circumstances, and are by no means a major feature. They were decisively dealt with in the early days of Islam, and then this approach was endorsed in the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, whose practices provided guidance for the whole nation.

What about Now?

- All emphasis today is focused on acts of terrorism that are attributed to Muslims, while terrorism from other parties is completely ignored.
- The crises of the Islamic world are not new: It is not something new that its enemies control it and that many Muslim governments fail to manage their own affairs. So, why has terrorism appeared in the Islamic region in such a diversified, exaggerated way?
- Why is terrorism which is attributed to Muslims given such political, security and media attention, making it the international issue of the moment?
- Can the occurrence of the September 11th attacks in the U.S. be a sufficient justification for that change?!
- U.S. interests were previously targeted in Muslim, Arab as well as Western states. Even the European and Zionist interests were targeted in their own lands, and nothing happened like what is happening today. What is the reason behind that change? The reason appears to be that the Islamic world has been chosen as the supposed enemy of the West, which has been leading the world since the collapse of the Communist Bloc.
- Attempts to frame the nature of the confrontation with the Islamic world have, for years, been the focus of many regular discussions between U.S. and Russian leaders, and the center of NATO's meetings, too.
- Under the U.S. leadership, it was difficult for the West to confront the Islamic world and the new hegemony without having reasonable justifications. They decided that conflict with the Islamic world,

as they planned, should start from within the Islamic world itself. Therefore, the phenomenon of terrorism that is attributed to Muslims was generated and boosted.

- Consequently, the essential issue to be aware of is that terrorism has been implanted in our region from outside and is a cultural conflict forcibly imposed on us by the West. This fact should be kept in mind when looking at and interpreting events, it should be our guide towards a solution and should be an incentive to engage in the conflict in the right way.
- We should all be wary of being entrapped by the West to believe that terrorism is just an internal problem for which domestic parties, and not others, are responsible. This is not true, and the West's responsibility is beyond doubt.
- Faults of the Islamic world, both on the governmental and public levels, along with some Muslims' involvement in acts of violence are partly responsible. The enemies, however, cunningly exploit such faults for their own best interests and long-term, hidden goals.
- The world's great powers carefully study us and examine our contradictions. They ignite problems among us, watch us trying confusedly to settle them, and then interfere as honest advisers or peacemakers.
- The Islamic world is currently being besieged at the governmental, organizational and individual level. Even Muslim communities in Western nations are embattled and deprived of their rights, which were previously acknowledged, and all this is done in the name of launching a war against terrorism.

Manipulation of Terminology

- A most notable point observed concerning those that benefit from making and propagating the phenomenon of terrorism is that they always avoid giving a detailed, precise definition of terrorism. This enables them to practice many types of international terrorism, which serve and promote their interests in the name of defending human rights, minorities and the right of self-defense. They, in fact, commit

more violations of human rights and restrict more liberties, although they claim that they preserve such rights. The absence of a universal definition of terrorism also makes it possible for them to defame all forms of morally acceptable resistance to occupation if they occur in Muslim regions, and to stigmatize them as terrorist movements.

> We are trapped by confusing and misused terms as well as double standards. Here are some examples:
  - **Terrorism and *Jihâd* (fight in Allah's cause):** Such terms have become so ambiguous, even for many scholars and intellectuals, that the Palestinian *Jihâd* is deemed as terrorism and financial aid for it is seen as supporting terrorism. The same applies to Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan and others.
  - ***Kufr* (disbelief) and Islam:** The exacerbating problem of mutual accusations of *Kufr* among Muslims is the most dangerous outcome of terrorism. Accusing others of *Kufr*, which some bombers and rioters do, is always tackled by others by falling into the same mistake; that is the media and some scholars deem such accusers to be disbelievers, too. It is extremely vital that transgression and wrong actions should be met with an appropriate reaction and punishment, not with an action which is just as wrong. We should shun adopting a passive, futile position which is forbidden by the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, and, on the other hand, from being harsh and heavy-handed to each other.
  - ***Khurûj* (Dissension) and *Baghy* (Violent Transgression):** These are *Shar'î* concepts that have their own meaning and basis, but we use them arbitrarily, whether we understand them or not. Fairness and justice require us to approach violent groups and try to know more about them and deal with them suitably. This might bring them closer and closer to repentance and so give up their current position. Arbitrary accusations and attacks, however, will only result in their desire to take revenge and use more violence, which is terrorism in essence.

- **Generalization and Specification:** In times of dissension, opportunists and those with secret agendas begin to settle their accounts with their rivals among the religious scholars, causing the situation to become even worse. Also, making indefinite generalizations about the perpetrators of violent acts is unfair and shows a lack of understanding of the situation. There are differences amongst these people, and these differences should be taken into consideration.
- **Reform and Deform:** The plea for reform is claimed by everyone, both by the U.S., (i.e. abroad), and its allies, (i.e. domestically). Such reform, in fact, is intended to follow the American model. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers."}

  [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 11]

Media Warfare

- The powerful media machine is cunningly exploited to exaggerate this phenomenon, and to bring Muslim regions under the control of international norms, at all levels, political, cultural, moral and economic.
- Muslim and Arab media respond to such trends by broadcasting and propagating Western perceptions about the issue in addition to circulating printed material that re-form the Arab mentality and patterns of behavior.
- By doing so, these media are actually engaging in another equally dangerous kind of terrorism; one in which no bloodshed is visible, but the devastating results will be apparent only after many years. "War starts with words" as the saying goes.
- It is worth noting that in their misleading messages and rhetoric about those involved in acts of violence, they slide from the definite to the indefinite, from the specific to the general, and from individuals themselves to generalized judgments. This dangerously expands, rather than limits, the number of the accused.

The Chaos of Wrong Interpretations of Texts

- Texts of the pure Islamic *Sharī'ah* have often been subjected to careless interpretation and analysis according to the current norms and conceptions. This has created a really chaotic state in the interpretation and use of *Sharī'ah* texts and disciplines. While Muslim scholars cannot be exonerated from the responsibility for this state, it would be fair to realize that the immense amount of media support and promotion of chaos is clearly intentional, and that methods to deal with it are very limited. Under this chaos, the scholars' ability to state evidence against the perpetrators of terrorist operations and refute their arguments is lessened.
- One of the biggest mistakes of many Muslim governments is that they categorize Muslim scholars and thinkers - hence giving some scholars more chances to influence the decision-making process, act and appear in public - on the basis of their support of the interests of the political authorities, not according to their scholarly reliability, independence or rationale.
- This discrimination, coupled with the affiliation of some scholars to the political authority and shaping their opinions to match the official ones, is one of the causes that undermined many scholars' roles in dealing with the problem of terrorism and resulted in the emergence of new ideological powers that influence young people who are implicated in terrorism.

Between Silence and Condemnation

- One of the Divine laws in the universe is that people differ in how they receive and understand *Sharī'ah* texts and rulings. Some individuals have extremist views and behavior, while others are extremely negligent. But the majority of Muslims, thanks to Allah, understand them correctly and are moderate and follow the guidance implied in these texts, as they have always been taught, in their homes and at school, to approach them in a moderate way.

- Some *Sharî'ah* texts and concepts may be understood by some as calling for extremist acts. In fact, it is the audience's way of thinking, not the text itself, which is defective. So, these ideas should be attributed to their advocates and not associated to the noble *Sharî'ah* or those who do not hold these views. Holistic judgments make the situation even worse, not better, and increase the gap between different parties. Also, a distinction should be made between holding a religious approach that adheres correctly to Allah's *Sharî'ah* and an excessive, misguided one that might rely on a misinterpretation of the texts and concepts.
- Extremism is a human trait that can be found in some people, but its prevalence and levels vary depending on the factors of time, place and circumstances. Social circles surrounding some extremists may have caused them to develop immoderate attitudes, which grow to create a problem which threatens the social order and security of the country.
- Continually connecting scholars and Islamic discourse to the problem of violence implies a false claim and expands the scope of those accused of violence. This cannot, by any way, be acceptable for the Islamic world as a whole.
- Accusing those who are silent of conniving is a form of distrust of the Islamic principles that reign Muslims' lives. This, on the one hand, reminds us of what happened in the dissension in the past about the issue of the creation of the Qur'ân, and, on the other hand, contradicts with our Prophet's teachings to keep away from dissensions and not to participate in them. For example, he (PBUH) said:

  "There will be a period of turmoil in which the one who sits will be better than the one who stands, and the one who stands will be better than the one who walks, and the one who walks will be better than the one who runs."

  [Related by Muslim]
- One who holds a silent position is not necessarily approving of or conniving against the status quo. There may be a legitimate reason or logical justification for keeping silence. By the same token, a decrier is not inevitably honest about the views he declares.

- Sincere condemnation generally comes from trustworthy scholars and specialists. It is sufficient if it is explicitly stated by only some of them, because it is not obligatory for all of them to declare their views.
- Sincere condemnation does not launch a vituperative attack or blind criticism. It tries to exhibit fairness and objectivity, and it does not just show disapproval but looks at the causes and searches for solutions.

Who Provokes Terrorism?

- Scholars' main duty according to the *Sharî'ah*, with which Allah has entrusted them, is to convey the truth and be just, to fear no blame when saying anything for Allah's sake, to testify against any wrong action, and to enjoin what is good and forbid what is wrong, following the guidance of Allah's Book and His Prophet's *Sunnah*.
- Biased people claim that the scholars' announcement of the truth about the present situation of the Muslims provokes violence. This is completely untrue! While scholars do not connive against or approve of any sins and iniquities, they also derive from the *Sharî'ah* the methods needed to eliminate wrong acts.
- It is those who violate Allah's ordinances and perpetrate abominable deeds that should logically be deemed as provoking terrorism. They act to stimulate people who are full of enthusiasm and zeal, as well as those who may not know the correct ways to denounce evil deeds according to the *Sharî'ah*, so that they commit acts that are immoderate and violent.

Human Dignity

- The noble *Sharî'ah* ensures human dignity. It is an Islamic value that should be respected and observed justly with everyone.
- Anger towards perpetrators of violence should not cause us to transgress the limits of human dignity and honor that the Muslim nations hold when launching defensive campaigns against these people. We should introduce an ideal Islamic model to deal with such issues, not violate human rights like the Western nations in their war against terrorism, and follow the Islamic teachings concerning these matters.

The Best Approach to the Problem

- The increase of violence and bombings in Arab and Muslim nations is the product of a reality that is made up of many components. It would be an oversimplification, for such a complex issue, to look at only one component and leave all others. Official and nonofficial responsibilities overlap at the political, ideological, judicial, security, social and media levels. Also, psychological, family, educational, cultural and economic components play important roles in the emergence of the phenomenon, in addition to national and international events.
- Any approach to the issue should be based on real feelings of responsibility and earnestness. Each party should pay attention to its own responsibility, not just to those of others. Focusing on others and ignoring one's own mistakes will end up, as is the case today, in disputes, mutual accusations and settlements of accounts.
- Unless the phenomenon is tackled in this open, integrated and responsible manner, any efforts will be a complete waste of time, a step farther away from the right approach to the problem, and a loss of the capability to reach effective solutions. The problem may be even exacerbated if the current approaches continue to be adopted. The worst that might happen is to adopt a solution that is imposed by some party according to their specific wishes or bias, while it is not really a solution to the problem but just makes things go from bad to worse.
- The restriction of the study of the phenomenon to one single component, or the focus only on one party, seems to have been intentional, especially when it is the prevailing approach adopted by officials and the media. It is in the best interests and the need for stability that we keep away from the current situation, and that the region's governments avoid being seen as having a restricted or biased focus.
- The safety of our Muslim societies is a collective responsibility that has to be shouldered by every wise person. It would be a violation of trust to give up that responsibility or to focus solely on gaining personal benefits and privileges. This view is based on the fact that the Islamic and Arab regions have a long, glorious Islamic history when they

were committed to Islam and the interaction with other nations was according to the Islamic teachings and doctrines. Therefore, it would be very unwise to handle recent, transient transgressions by using power and threatening the region's security.

- In the current paper, the first premise that should be emphasized when dealing with violence as a phenomenon is the condemnation of violence and bombings by all the public, and the realization that these are not legitimate ways to achieve the desired reform.

The Main Causes of the Phenomenon

I. Individual Level (Contributing Factors)

1. **Psychological Factor:** Typically, a violent personality is a psychogenetic abnormality that some people develop, and it may be caused by a genetic disorder or other external factors. Religious beliefs have nothing to do with this case; extremist characters may be Muslim, liberal or left-wing. They may have active personalities, tending to take action and execute other's schemes, or they may have ideological tendencies, thus becoming theorists and leaders. In between the two types, there is a large group of normal people who are susceptible to violence, and whether or not they take that course depends on other factors. If the problem and its causes are not dealt with successfully, this group of people will yield elements that feed the perpetrators of violence.
2. **Family and Environmental Factors:** For example, youths may have strict parents, or a tough, nervous disposition may reign over their family and community members, while sources of moderate, positive relationships and influences are completely absent.
3. **The Economic Factor:** This may not be a main reason, but it does contribute to the problem. In principle, poverty humbles the poor, while affluence gives much power. But the problem, as we estimate it, is the withholding of rights and opportunities as well as injustice and transgression, both against the poor and the rich. These underprivileged circumstances cause them to refuse reality and use violence.

4. **The Educational Level:** It would be inaccurate to think that the level of education reached by those involved in violence is limited, or that a particular type of education or culture generates violence. The truth is that a poor standard of education which is unable to produce independent, open-minded personalities with sound knowledge and behavioral patterns, either acquired from educational and non-educational sources, is the key element in creating such personalities. Such people easily change their belief and opinions.

II. General Level (Stimulating Context)

1. ***Shar'î* and Scientific Factors:** On their path towards modernization, Arab and Muslim nations needed an organizational and administrative structure for different institutions and sectors. This structure, however, has for the most part been established without any scholarly, *Shar'î* basis. This has widened the current gap between people's understanding of their religion and the reality they live in.

   It should be emphasized that our societies are Islamic, and they definitely need religious scholars to meet their spiritual needs. When these are absent, people will look for other sources. Due to this vital need of the members of the community, and since the administrative policy prevents the well-qualified personnel from undertaking their roles, some individuals just follow unqualified persons.

2. **The Reform Factor:** Imposing restrictions on the formal scholarly institutions and constantly binding them to politics in Muslim nations have created opportunities for many individual calls for reform. Surely, the nature of Islam teaches people to make and enjoin what is good and to forbid what is wrong, but it is inevitable that some individuals will carry this out properly while others will make mistakes in the process.

   The problem is that on this particular issue talk often arises, when making policies and in the media, about an external role. This claim comes specifically from some calls and movements that adopt *Jihâd*. I find this misleading and holistic. First of all, Islamic movements orig-

inally have reformative objectives. But it cannot be denied that they do lack methodological, practical and reformative capabilities that are effective to cope with a continuously changing world. Among the reasons for this are policy restrictions, not responding to reformist's proposals, along with the limitations of these proposals themselves.

Indeed, some local reformist efforts based on an educational and scholarly framework were exerted before to discipline the youth's ardent and impulsive feelings against all forms of infringement and against the insufficient efforts made by the religious scholars to promote reform. But because of the governments' distrust of such efforts, tending to counter and restrict them, there emerged a crisis that ended up frustrating such efforts and reformers. This, in turn, deepened feelings of resentment among reform enthusiasts and created a very fertile ground for some of them to drift into extremism and violence, in the absence of an effective, qualified cadre that was capable of counteracting any drift away from moderate actions.

3. **The Political Factor (Internally):** The experience of modernization in Arab and Muslim nations was a little bit hasty; it did not consider about having an equal number of specialists whose participation and experience are required (they are usually called "technocrats"), and those who have knowledge of the *Shar'ī* as well as social experience. This balance can help preserve society's unity when borrowing the latest modernization techniques that are concerned with religious or social matters.

   The blind desire for development and progress has created a state where the so called advocates of modernization are granted power and privileges and their opinions are highly appreciated, while those who may have some reservations because of the *Shar'ī* or social reasons are given little, if any, role to play.

   With this policy, some governments have taken internal decisions and strategies interpreted by their conservative societies in a way that undermines their credibility, either with regard to the decisions and strategies themselves or their timing and circumstances. When such

social changes and pressures imposed by the ruling authorities, in spite of popular disapproval, are added to the absence of any political system where one can express opinions or protest, or the lack of legitimate ways of calling for a change, the tensions can be expected to increase and have destructive effects. This is the present case.

4. **The Political Factor (Externally):** The nature of the international political climate necessitates that Arab states engage in regional and international relations. But these relations, and subsequent positions, are interpreted by others in a way that affects the credibility of these states and opens the door to personal viewpoints and prejudices concerning these relations and positions.

5. **The Economic, Administrative and Regulatory Factors:** The management of public property, administrative and financial corruption, increased social injustice, violation of individual rights, upper-class's excessive influence and the lower-class's feelings of socioeconomic deprivation, are all factors that contributed to the phenomenon of violence and extremism. At the same time, the middle class, that constitutes the majority of the population, have been watching the scene with deep resentment, even though they are not the most grossly endangered group. Indignation, in particular, has increased with the cumulative failures in public management and performance, not to mention the prevalence of favoritism.

   In my opinion, these particular factors are what contributed most to the deterioration, the subversion of social unity among groups in the community and the support of violence by many parties, even though they do not approve of the agendas and schemes behind it, as a way to express and alleviate feelings of suppression and deprivation.

6. **The Media-Related Factor:** One of the most important but officially ignored reasons for the increased tensions in Muslim and Arab societies is that parties with Islamic views and valuable insights into contemporary affairs are not granted the same opportunities in the media as other parties. This has created an impression that the governments do not support this kind of view. Unfortunately,

media-monopolizing parties have caused the problem to grow and make the situation volatile: The mass media has recently been full of feverish debates tackling violence and extremism from prejudiced points of view that pose many fallacies. They have exploited the current events to raise issues that were previously avoided, talking overtly about the "religious environment" that our societies enjoy, accusing it of "promoting extremism", and calling for the adoption of Westernization and the restriction of local and foreign centers of *Da'wah* (exhortation to reform in accordance with the Islamic teachings). All of this has created negative feelings, increased the concerns of conservative societies about their religious elements, and fostered a climate that supports notions of violence and extremism.

7. **The International Factors:** There are numerous regional, Arab and Islamic crises, such as the Palestinian question, the successive problems in the Gulf, the wars in Afghanistan and many other examples. These crises, along with the international and American foreign policies towards the region, have put the region's governments in an unfavorable situation, aroused among its citizens feelings of humiliation and powerlessness, and produced a general tendency to favor any course of action to change these conditions.

   Governments are believed to have much responsibility for this situation, since they have disabled the potential of their societies to deal with these crises. This point, though important and relevant, is not covered in detail here. It has been so frequently investigated that it has become an established fact.

8. **Historical Factors:** In brief, it is well known that under certain complicated, international conditions, some Arab and Muslim states supported the Afghan fighters in their war against the Russian occupation. This is well understood and justified, even in the political arena. But the mistake was that the Muslim youths were sent to Afghanistan without any preparation, and were left there without any care. The governmental financing enabled many parties to control and exploit them, in the absence of wise and honest guidance.

When they returned to their home countries, the youths were not readily embraced or rehabilitated. Many security bodies mistakenly suspected and pursued them, initiated several clashes with them, and practiced forms of torture against them and, in some cases, their families. This increasingly aroused their desire for resistance and revenge, resulting in the emergence of a specific "group" of these oppressed people. This group developed to include many others who did not go to Afghanistan but were prompted because of the persecution by the security forces and for other reasons to join this group. In fact, no practical procedures, other than cruel practices of the security forces, were taken to solve the problem, so the group continued growing and acquired the image of a "persecuted hero".

Other Controversial Factors

1. The Islamic Discourse

This new political concept has recently been widely used, in view of internal and external pressures. There are so many bodies claiming an official status in their approach to the issue that nobody knows exactly what goal is being sought. The problem is that the means to settle the controversy seem inadequate and do not correctly represent the mainstream.

Accordingly, to hold the "Islamic discourse" responsible for the phenomenon of violence is a fabricated accusation and it does not hit the real causes. It would be very deceptive to utter such ambiguous, unspecific judgments. Also, condoning the attacks against Islamic *Da'wah* will result in dangerous consequences and increase the problems of violence and extremism. The current situation should be tackled very carefully, since such a fifteen-century old culture cannot be demolished and the Islamic *Da'wah* is firmly stuck to by its adopters and perceived as the ideal doctrine (and it really is). So, a clash is most likely to happen, and a wise, well-organized deliberation is required to cope with the situation.

2. *Shar'ī* Education

The controversy around the role of the *Shar'ī* program of education in creating the phenomenon has taken a too negative and unexpected course of action. Foreign pressures, of whatever magnitude, cannot affect such sovereign-related affairs. I believe that unless some influential elements in Muslim states had willingly complied with such pressures, we would not have been in this difficult situation. In the past, the region's governments could successfully neutralize many American pressures, then why is this particular issue dealt with in this way at this particular time?! If conditions continue as they are now, the future complications of the crisis will be unpredictable.

We need to take care of the public interest that is demanded by the general public and secures stability, even if it is in opposition to the interests and pressures of national and international powers.

Without going into much detail, I find it imperative to look at the conditions of the *Shar'ī* program of education in some of the Arab countries that suffer from the problem of extremism. I feel confident that the results will show that it is a kind of political deception and prejudice to focus solely and insistently on the *Shar'ī* curricula as the number one cause behind the phenomenon.

What I fear most is that we are exacerbating, rather than elevating, the problem with such judgments and approaches.

3. *Da'wah* and Relief Agencies

Generally speaking, it must be noted that the increasing debate about the role of *Da'wah* and relief agencies should not be allowed to be an issue in favor of certain parties. These parties act, solely and deliberately, in the current difficult situation to achieve personal gains and interests by claiming that these organizations or agencies are the main source of extremism. This claim simply lacks credibility and evidence. Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"Say, 'Produce your proof, if you should be truthful.'"}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 111]

Essential Questions

➢ **Are We Seriously Willing to Find a Solution?**

Unfortunately, in highly critical problems, we almost always take temporary, irrelevant solutions. We should give up this tendency and adopt a more realistic, scientific approach if we are to solve our problems radically.

➢ **Who Makes the Decision to Take Action?**

Decisions, contributions and agencies relating to the solution are numerous and overlapping. One cannot know exactly what bodies are in charge of enforcing effective solutions.

➢ **Are There Handicaps?**

Solutions may be handicapped by revealing incorrect findings of the study of the phenomenon, focusing on certain aspects and not others, stopping effective decisions that do not conform to the prejudiced way of thinking, or allowing opportunists to have some kind of role.

➢ **What Beliefs and Motives Do Perpetrators of Violence Have?**

This information should be obtained from the perpetrators of violence themselves and from those whom they trust, not from the security agencies which initiated the hostility with them and caused them to be a real problem. In many cases, the apparent goals of their activities that some bodies claim, may not be the real motives for any of them.

Suggested Solutions

I. Short-Term Strategies

1. Careful Scrutiny of the Phenomenon

There is a need to form independent, confidential committees of trustworthy scholars and experts of the phenomenon along with a well-chosen selection of security officials to interview some of those involved in the phe-

nomenon, whether in or out of prison, and read all archived information relevant to the issue. Its goal should be to study the typical personality of perpetrators of violence and form a clear idea about them. This can [if it is not prejudiced or swayed by preconceived ideas] help evaluate their real features, abilities and number as well as their socioeconomic conditions and their exact motives.

2. Dialogue Enforcement

Any close examination of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* as well as the long history of humankind, as it is documented, will indicate how important dialogue is and how many problems it has solved. Its value in solving the current problem is beyond doubt. The nations that have suffered from the problem of violence have ultimately come to know that dialogue is an effective tool in eliminating this plague. As for the implementation of strategies, they depend on the bodies in charge. We urgently need to start to take action before it is too late.

3. Security Interventions

It is widely agreed that security interventions are important and have an immediate effect when tackling problems, for as the well-known saying states "Allah deters by authority what He does not (deter) by the Qur'ân". But we should reconsider the security practices undertaken in Arab states when pursuing, investigating and extending detention, which sometimes occurs even for those who are not engaged in illegal activities. "To err on the side of forgiveness is better than to err on the side of executing a penalty" as the saying goes.

4. Media Intervention

The exploitation of the media in stimulating disputes, encouraging injured parties to settle accounts and making unfounded accusations should be stopped, and the current methodology of media coverage should be changed.

II. Long-Term Strategies

1. Reinforcement of the Adherence to Islam

Obviously, Muslim nations should make Islam as the underlying basis for their political and social constitution, because of the conservative nature of this region. Conventionally, internal security is the product of social harmony among all members and groups of the society, depending on the particular underlying basis of any given society.

So, those who want to tackle the current crisis by disabling the underlying basis of their societies are actually dreaming and subjecting their nations to division and disorder.

2. Consultation and Expression of Opinion

The absence of practical channels of comprehensive consultation, means of expressing one's opinion and involvement in taking or evaluating public decisions in Muslim countries have had severe effects on the emergence and development of the problem. Although some Arab countries have taken some steps in this respect, it is just the beginning; there need to be larger steps, governed by instructions in the *Sharî'ah*, to establish integrated institutions for consultation and work out effective channels to understand different perspectives towards reform and development.

3. The Policy of Reform

Decision-takers in Muslim countries should be advised to contain the increasing state of congestion and avoid decisions that may contribute to the conditions in which the phenomenon of violence thrives. Current strategies to obtain stability and safety are incompatible with the provocations. The public interest necessitates tangible, effective procedures that promote the internal credibility of the governments and remove tensions. Domestic and foreign policies should be reorganized so that trust and respect guide the relationship between the governments and the general public, without violation of the rights of the minority.

Moreover, we should beware of the foreign enemy agents and advocates, guard against their deception, eliminate utilitarian and opportunist networks, enforce all-embracing policies of accountability and preserve public property. This, naturally, requires that the judiciary be made independent and its different agencies be reformed.

4. Empowerment of the Religious Scholars

We should eliminate any restrictions imposed on scholars, develop their institutions and change the state of distrusting them. Indeed, it is the scholars who can, hopefully, help overcome the problem.

5. Establishment of Social Justice

We should act to remove injustice, fulfill people's rights, provide opportunities according to peoples' abilities, penalize wrongdoers and cancel any unjustified privileges. Social justice can also be achieved by supporting and diversifying advocacy groups.

6. Educational Reform

We should strike a balance when distributing the responsibilities for the educational system and improve, not change, curricula and textbooks. This can lead to an educational process that creates well-educated, qualified and resistant personalities. However, this can never be achieved, in my perspective, if some parties want to instigate a conflict between the religious culture and its core beliefs and subvert the very basics which should underpin every Muslim society.

7. Paying Due Attention to the Youths

We should expand and enrich youth and social activities and programs in schools, mosques and districts, in a public and systematic way that includes and guides all youths so that they are not affected by secret, illegal groups in the absence of the supervision of their parents and educators. Restriction of such public programs would increase the problem and make youths vulnerable to undesired influences.

8. Media Reform

First, we should act to end the current media crisis by enacting regulations that can secure a responsible media which is based on the underlying principles of the society and which avoids incitement and provocation. Also, it is important to enable the conservative majority to have their own media institutions and activists. The media agencies should unanimously use precise, rather than confused, words and adopt a professional methodology that respects and promotes the cultural constitution of the Muslim society.



Cultural Dimension of Violence



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Fanaticism in beliefs and thoughts of the 'self' drives one to reject the beliefs of others as well as to develop pretexts for the use of force and violence, thereby shifting the role of ideas from being instruments of change, freedom and liberation to being a means of human oppression and tyranny, ultimately leading to the creation of the very same situation that was supposed to be remedied.

To define and understand a given term is the starting point for an in-depth study of the topic at hand. This is because defining the term leads to a consensus about the meaning or definition of the term, and provides a conceptual framework upon which the study may be based.

Owing to the fact that the words 'culture' and 'violence' in Arabic bear a relatively wide variety of connotations, largely due to the presence of different ideological backgrounds as well as their usage in conjunction with other terms, I thought it prudent to specify a conceptual domain for these two terms to help simplify the subject.

Firstly: Culture

The word 'culture' in Arabic is connected to such meanings as understanding, comprehension, skill or dexterity, decency, refinement or any improvement that stems from the human self.

Al-Fayrûz Abâdî defines the word *(thaqafahû)* (i.e. culture) as to come across; or take, capture or gain victory over. Close to this definition is the use of the word (translated as 'gain dominance') in Allah's verse:

> ***{"So if you, [O Muhammad], gain dominance over them in war, disperse by [means of] them those behind them..."}***
>
> [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 57]

Also, derivatives of the word 'culture' all revolve around being shrewd or astute, and the process of comprehending or grasping.

In *"Lisân Al-'Arab"* (i.e. The Arabic Tongue), Ibn Manzûr states that the verbal derivative of 'culture' is to renew or rectify. Also he draws a connection between being cultured and astuteness and the ability to learn quickly.

From the standpoint of terminology and common usage, it is possible to count hundreds of different meanings for the term 'culture'. It is also possible that this enormous number of definitions is indicative of the obscurity surrounding the meaning of the word, especially when we take into account that the term itself is foreign to the fabric of Muslim thought. Indeed, it is quite rare to come across this term in Muslim writings, as some terminology experts, such as Dr. Ash-Shâhid Al-Bûshaykhî, observed.

Also, it is due to the encounter between Western and Islamic civilizations that the term 'culture' was adopted, along with other ideas and concepts, so that the word 'culture' became regarded as the general domain within which dwell the different specifics, characteristics and ingredients that differentiate one society from another or one nation from another. This understanding holds for whether these differences are material, ideological, aesthetic or spiritual, and includes human values, manners and conceptions. It is also used to signify thought, innovation, behavior and expression throughout the different aspects of life.

If we try to come to an understanding that brings together the various definitions and connotations, it is possible that we will come to something very similar to the notion arrived at by Mâlik Ibn Nabî, may Allah have mercy on him, who defined 'culture' in his book, *Mushkilat Ath-Thaqâfah* (The Problem with Culture) by saying, "It is a set of behavioral characteristics and social values that influence an individual from birth, thereby becoming the subconscious relationship between his behavior and the way of life in his surrounding environment."

With this in mind, we would say that 'culture' is, "the enormous amount of accumulated conceptual, social and cultural experiences that are both intrinsic and acquired; and the total sciences, customs, beliefs, ideologies, laws, conventions, arts and literature with which the individual interacts and which form his personality, thereby embedding him with specific behavioral and thought patterns."

With this understanding, 'culture' refers to the main characteristics that differentiate a nation from other nations and that shapes the identities of its individuals, so that any behavioral practices, be they positive or negative, are, in fact, practical manifestations of the acquired integral factors that are a result of the prevailing and acquired culture.

It can hence be said that the human identity is the product of culture and a result of it, and that the noticeable differences between the Arab, French, African or American personas, for instance, are a direct result of the difference in culture...And just as culture shapes or forms individual persona, this persona in turn, through its particularity and general behavior, is a means through which a given culture is preserved and maintained.

Mâlik Ibn Nabî likened the task of culture in a society to that of blood in a body by saying that, "it (blood) is composed of red and white blood cells that circulate in one plasma or liquid to nourish the body. Likewise, culture is the blood in the body of a society that nourishes its civilization and development, and that carries the ideas of its elite just as it carries the ideas of its masses; and that all these ideas co-exist harmoniously in a single liquid of similar predispositions, common ideologies and matching tastes.

It is also possible to differentiate, within any culture, between essential or intrinsic components - that make up the center or root foundations of its individuals' mindsets and sentiments - and those components that are acquired.

With this difference in mind, it is possible to call upon legal proofs to prove the existence of intrinsic components upon which the so-called culture of a human being is based, before talking about components that are acquired and transient and that either bring one closer to these intrinsic components, or drive him away from and conflict with them. Allah says:

{"So direct your face [i.e. self] toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion..."}

[Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 30]

Fiṭrah, which Allah embedded into every human, is the natural tendency to incline towards faith and piety. Furthermore, the Prophetic tradition pertaining to *'fiṭrah'* clarifies that the acquired components, which stem from a person's surroundings, direct him in a specific direction. Regarding this point, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"No child is born except on (having) Al-Fiṯrah (Islam) and then his parents make him Jewish, Christian or Magian."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

If, then, these acquired components are not in equilibrium or harmony with the *Fiṯrah* that Allah has ingrained within every person, or at least bring one closer to it by his faith, the result is contradiction and conflict within the person's mind and behavior as well as conflicts and schisms within his personality.

This reveals a deep flaw in the structure of a given culture which is in conflict with its *Fiṯrah* as its culture is supposed to be the embodiment of a given locality, reality, vision and the front used to face different situations.

Even a quick glance at our culture today shows that it is a blatant example of a culture that is steeped in blind-imitation, and that it bears witness that its nation has abandoned the principles and human values prescribed by its religion and that were revealed for the benefit of every human in every place and for every time. Ultimately, it is clear that our culture is unable to accompany human development and to pioneer the building of a civilization.

Indeed, it is a culture that continues to suffer from rigidity and estrangement, a lack of understanding and a weakness in its scientific ability as well as its ability to innovate, let alone its shortcomings in taste and its indecisiveness pertaining to freedom of thought and opinion.

In spite of this, and in spite of the importance of culture at both the individual and social levels, and its deep entrenchment in both the human psyche and sentiment, it can still be subject to change. Indeed, many of the verses that are repeated in the Qur'ân and that state that a human being is responsible for his actions are themselves proof that it can be subject to change, just as it can be subject to stagnation and rigidity. History itself provides us with a variety of examples of those who chose to set themselves apart from their surroundings, culture and societies, such as is the example of Pharaoh's wife. In this regard, Allah says:

{"And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people."}

[At-Tahrîm (Prohibition): 11]

It is essential for the individuals of any nation that affiliates itself with Islam to stay in harmony with their *Fitrah* and to accept only those cultures that do not conflict with the Islamic way of life. It is also important that they accommodate everything the word 'culture' entails in the way of advancement and evolution in different aspects of human life, as well as innovations produced by humans as a result of their interactions with their material or social surroundings. Likewise, it is important that hidden potential be brought to light according to the standards acceptable to Islam, and within an allowable context.

Based on this, it is possible to define Islamic culture as, "the interaction of the creed - as a perspective - and the interaction of the *Sharî'ah* (Islamic law) - as a law - with daily realities as perceived by the Muslim mind and sentiment. Resulting from this interaction is a set of attitudes, behaviors, systems and arts."

Furthermore, it is the interaction of all these with external cultural influences that result in the nation having various values and principles.

Secondly: Violence

Many a definition has been suggested for violence, but they all concur on the idea that it is every act that causes harm and suffering to others, whether that harm be physical such as beating or killing, moral such as ridiculing or degrading by the subjugation of others using force. Taking an analytical look at violence, Dr. Muhammad Nûr Farahât proposes that, "the notion of the word 'violence' belongs to a class of connotations that are most commonly used in the context of behavioral patterns or sciences. Moreover, the criminal law contains different suggestions for the term 'violence' and its synonyms, such as force, coercion, threatening and intimidation, none of which is apt to qualify as a legal, juristic and specific meaning for the word 'violence'.

Within this context, it can be said that it (violence) is a behavioral reaction characterized by strong emotions that diminish one's level of perception and thought, and that deprives the mind of its ability to persuade and be persuaded. This behavioral reaction is brought about by the incorporation of a specific culture, which is acquired due to a mixture of factors, within the self. These factors include religious ignorance, diminished temperance and lack of moderation, the limitation of freedom and channels of verbal communication, the rejection of the 'other' (opinion or view or those holding them) and animosity towards them as well as other factors.

Considering this view, we find that there is a strong tie between the manifestations of violence, the devices used to practice it, and between the culture that directs a human being and controls his specific and general behavior, starting with those manifest in family and social relationships. In a sense, it is a craving for supremacy and an emphasis on the notion of force with disregard for the personality of the 'other' or his right to exist as well as a denial of his difference of opinion. Ultimately, it is an expression of the failure of the mind and heart alike.

It is important to draw attention to the fact that violence is not an inborn tendency tied to the nature of a human being, as some Western philosophies have suggested, and that, rather, it is an acquired behavior.

Islam has prohibited violence due to the fact that it results in injustice, animosity and the degradation of human dignity. Allah says:

> ***{"...and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors."}*** [Al-Mā'idah (The Table): 87]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Indeed Allah is kind (gentle) and He loves kindness (gentleness) and confers for kindness (gentleness) that which He does not confer for violence."*
>
> [Related by Muslim]

In another _Hadîth_, he (PBUH) also said:

"Facilitate (things to people concerning religious matters), do not make it hard (for them), give (them) good tidings, and do not make (them) run away (from Islam)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

In addition to these above-mentioned legal proofs, there is an abundance of other Islamic legal proofs that clearly show that violence is rejected and that it is considered antagonistic to basic human nature and a degradation of human pride and dignity.

So, if the international media systems are content to blame the manifestations of violence, terrorism and the denigration of humanity on Islam and its followers, in spite of the fact that the teachings of the Qur'ân and the Prophetic traditions go against this and prohibit it, and no matter how much it (the international media) mentions the notion of *Jihâd*, it is nothing more than a pretext through which Muslims may be restricted (in the practice of their religion), distanced from their religion and ultimately waged war upon.

Cultural Manifestations Resulting from Deviant Values (Violence as an Example)

1. The lack of self-understanding

The practice of destroying the 'other' indicates that one is inflicted with a lack of understanding of one-self, weakened self-confidence, destruction of the actual self and the incapacity to see the 'other' as a human being rather than in terms of a rigid belief system that cultivates spite and hatred and is frankly incapable of confronting problems.

Violence is, therefore, a practice that takes place between a person and his 'self' even before emerging as an act which happens between a person and others. A person is said to be harsh with himself when he prevents himself from comfort, tranquility, mercy, the opportunity to live in peace and to experience the love of that which is beneficial and the love of

people as well as the opportunity to interact and so understand, communicate and cooperate with them. This harshness is also an aversion to a life that is stable and filled with tranquility and cordiality as well as an unleashing of individualistic tendencies and destructive selfishness that sees no good in the 'other'.

Self-understanding begins with the mind, and so when the mind is afflicted with a calamity affecting its composition, its ability to form a clear picture to help it understand its 'self' and the world around it becomes greatly diminished. This results in confusion in the way the mind deals with the 'self' and its surroundings, just as it causes the mind to decrease in efficacy and to become unable to produce any positive change so that it begins to show cultural manifestations that lead to deviant and extremist values and ideals that are degrading to the human 'self'. Ultimately, a person afflicted with this calamity is left without a sense of awareness, consciousness or balance so that his relationship with those around him, in turn, generates conflict, disaccord, estrangement, disharmony and discord.

Due to this, an understanding of the human 'self' as described in the Qur'ân and Prophetic traditions and the uncovering of its God-given nature is the first step required to leave the confinement of a deviant culture (attitude). The 'self' is one of Allah's signs, Exalted be He; He swears by it in the Qur'ân and is an important source of understanding. Allah says:

> *{"We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?"}* [Fussilat (Expounded): 53]

He who does not know his 'self' cannot possibly know or understand others and therefore becomes susceptible to practicing acts of aggression. To define the position of a human being in relation to the world around him as the upholder of the divine trust that characterizes him as Allah's viceroy on Earth, is one of the important ways in which to visualize the understanding produced by the Muslim mind or intellect.

This is because being a viceroy entails three fundamental points: The worship of Allah, Exalted be He, the development of the world around us (by means of population and construction), and its rectification and maintenance in the best possible way.

For this reason it is necessary to understand and adjust the 'self' in order that it may form sound relationships with others, and so that it might be possible to improve the situation of others and to direct them in a way that is pleasing to Allah, Exalted be He. This is not in the least for the reason that, "Islam, in its rectification of the human being, encourages and cherishes equilibrium and understanding between a person and his self, so that it then becomes easier to understand others".

Such an understanding is not possible if one abandons Allah's Path, a path that He has chosen for his servants and made a source of enlightenment for them, as Allah says:

> ***{"This [Qur'ân] is an enlightenment for mankind and a guidance and mercy for a people who are certain [in faith]."}***
>
> [Al-Jâthiyah (Kneeling): 20]

Indeed, the realities of arrogance, violence and deviance that all humanity suffer from today, are nothing more than the natural result of deviating from the path shown to us via Allah's prophets. It is also due to abandoning the Divine Scriptures revealed for the benefit and rectification of man and the clarification of his purpose in this life.

One must, therefore, attribute any shortcomings or flaws to himself. Allah says:

> ***{"And [by] the soul and He Who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]"}*** [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7-10]

So, it is important for one to look at his 'self' and improve himself before attributing the blame for any shortcomings to external sources or any other reasons, as Allah says:

{"Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."}

[Ar-Ra'd (Thunder): 11]

It follows that the starting point for any change needs to be internal, and that any external changes which are not associated with a continuous change of the states of the 'self' will be of no avail. Indeed, that which happens at an external level is a result of that which happens at an internal level, whether good or bad, positive or negative.

There is a lesson to be learned from the story of the first sin, and that is that when Adam, peace be upon him, disobeyed his Lord, and he and his wife ate from the forbidden tree, Allah asked him:

{"Did I not forbid you from that tree..."}

[Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 22]

As a result, they responded by saying:

{" They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves..."}

[Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 23]

From his saying, therefore, we see that he did not mention that it was Satan who tempted and deceived them, thus blaming themselves for the fact that they had disobeyed Allah when they violated His command. The dialogue that took place between Adam and Allah, Exalted be He, reveals both self-reproach and self-criticism as well as the capacity to take the blame for the actions of the 'self'.

Indeed, to ponder, re-examine and criticize the self is a necessary stage in the development of the 'self'; and forms a defense system against the confrontation of different ideological and cultural incursions. In a general sense, an awareness of the importance of the human being, in terms of mind, self and body, is the key to implement many principles set forth by the Qur'ân, the Prophetic biography and authentic Prophetic traditions to establish a balanced human being who is competent of being a metaphoric brick in the construction of a nation. Alláh says:

{"Then is one who laid the foundation of his building on righteousness [with fear] from Allah and [seeking] His approval better or one who laid the foundation of his building on the edge of a bank about to collapse, so it collapsed with him into the fire of Hell? And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people."}

[At-Tawbah (Repentance): 109]

Undoubtedly, a sound structure cannot be built except on solid foundations that start with being at terms with the 'self', and developing it to have feelings of mutual affection and mercy, as well as purifying it from feelings of hate and aggression towards the 'other', regardless of how different their opinions may be. This allows the opportunity to win the confidence of others, hear their opinion and respect their points of view as is suggested in Allah's saying:

{"...And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 159]

Also, in a marvelous way to motivate good action, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Should I not direct you to a thing which, if you do, will foster love amongst you: Spread Salâm (i.e., the salutation of Islam: "As-Salâmu 'Alaykum (peace be upon you)") amongst you."

[Related by Muslim, Book of Faith]

This is a fundamental amidst other fundamentals needed to build bridges (between individuals). It is by spreading *Salâm* (Islamic greetings) that many an obstacles may be eliminated and groundwork for discussion, mutual advice and knowledge may be established. In laying down yet another basic principle, he (PBUH) said:

"Smiling in your brother's face is (counted to you as) Sadaqah (i.e., you will take the reward for an act of charity for it)."

[Related by At-Tirmidhî]

These principles, as well as others that pour into and enrich the various meanings of faith, and attach the heart to Allah as well as (a desire for mutual) understanding and mutual affection all serve to bring about unity between man and the world around him, as well as to sew the seeds of mercy and compassion between himself and others. Indeed it is the sole reality which was granted to man for the benefit of the human soul and the creation of tranquility and reassurance required to rid the self of feelings of spite, hatred and impulsiveness. These principles (or their establishment) also encourage the emergence of goodness and benefaction from hidden places of the self so that they may pour forth profusely for the benefit of all.

2. The Spread of Fanaticism, Closed-mindedness, and The Confiscation of Others Freedom

One of the dangerous sources from which the culture of violence and the spread of fanaticism, spite and hatred originate, is the idea that absolute truth is owned solely by one's 'self'. This leads to the rejection of any beliefs that one does not hold, as well as a lack of receptiveness to any ideas other than those held by the 'self.'

This also leads to the confiscation of the rights of others to choose as well as the rejection of the idea that truth cannot be contained within a single mind frame. It is also to deny that truth is the cumulative result of complementing ideas from different sources and that absolute truth belongs solely to Allah. This form of closed-mindedness also forgets or refuses to acknowledge that human ideas, as well as actions, are subject to being both correct and incorrect, for they are neither divine nor unquestionable; nor are they absolute. This, of course, is due to the very fact that they are human in nature and that alone renders them limited and temporary or subject to change.

Unfortunately, most of the different social cells and ideologies within our nation today are built on exclusion, dismissal, closed-mindedness, the confiscation of rights and an aversion to consultation and discussion. Such cells include the family, learned or cultured individuals, experts, professionals and also rulers, all of whom tend to practice that which develops and establishes a culture of violence.

This, of course, is in contradiction to gestures we may hear from one group or another that claim to encourage discussion and mutual understanding. Such gestures are, for the most part, iterated for specific political or emotional goals set at a given point in time and never become part of an ideological system geared towards convincing people or allowing them to express themselves or to play any significant role.

The belief that one possesses absolute truth and monopolizes it produces a bias for the beliefs and thoughts one holds that, in turn, drives one to reject the beliefs of others as well as their legitimacy. This belief also drives him to impose his understanding of reality upon them as well as develop pretexts for the use of force and violence against those who reject his beliefs or ideas.

With this, ideas shift from being instruments of change, liberation and the drive towards freedom, to being a means of repression, tyranny and the actualization of a crisis that was meant, at the outset, to be remedied or changed by these ideas. Human experience with fanaticism is that it has yielded nothing but wars, tribulations and every form of spite, hatred, terrorism and destruction.

It is also possible that the abandonment of the 'etiquette of disagreement' present in Islam as well as the prevention of the use of *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) or the unification of thoughts and ideas, along with the confiscation of freedom, are all definitive factors behind the development of violence to the frightening extent we see today. Allah, Exalted be He, has advised against the forcible restriction or compulsion of people, even at the level of the creed, for everyone is entitled to choose. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

In another verse, Allah says:

{"And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed all of them entirely. Then, (O Muhammad), would you compel the people in order that they become believers?"}

[Yûnus (Jonah): 99]

Each of these two verses makes clear that compulsion is prohibited and that simply calling others to Islam and providing a reminder is what is required, as Allah says:

> *{"So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller."}*
>
> [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 21, 22]

Guidance, on the other hand, is the sole domain of Allah. In this regard, Allah says:

> *{"Not upon you, [O Muhammad], is [responsibility for] their guidance, but Allah guides whom He wills...."}*
>
> [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 272]

The door to freedom of choice in all fields is, hence, left wide open and the principle of equality becomes a principle for the peaceful coexistence between people of different religions, let alone those of the same religion or nation.

Since, compulsion and the use of force in matters that all (Islamic) scholars agree on are prohibited in Islam, then it would make even more sense that compulsion in areas that are subject to interpretation and a difference of opinion are much more unacceptable and regarded as a form of hegemony and oppression.

Within the bounds set by the 'etiquette of disagreement' and the respect for individuals' choices, there is no room for the outbidding, ridicule, or the muffling or silencing of other ideas. Rather, the doors of discussion, freedom of expression and the right to plead your case either between individuals of a single nation or between them and other nations are left open. Fanaticism, compulsion and the confiscation of freedom, on the other hand, serve to do nothing more than pour gasoline over the fires of extremist ideas, stubbornness and violence.

Disagreement between human beings is a natural phenomenon and a natural disposition that should not be ignored, and aside from being a human reality, it is also an Islamic reality that cannot be avoided.

In conjunction with this idea, as a person continues to rise above his selfishness, he finds within himself and his thoughts more and more room for the opinions of others. Through his discussions with others, and through freedom of thought, he also discovers the discrepancies that exist within himself and that are a part of any human personality.

With this in mind, disagreement is in itself a rich source of different ideas and numerous opinions that ultimately complement each other, serve to make human societies complete and protect them from tyranny. It (disagreement) is a primary will of Allah and one of the traditions or norms in existence. Allah says:

> ***{"And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ."}***
>
> [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 118]

Within the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), disagreement was lawful and provided an opportunity for discussion, exchange and understanding; Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Say (O Muhammad), 'Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'Allah. And indeed, we or you are either upon guidance or in clear error.'}*** [Saba' (Sheba): 24]

In this lie the ultimate abandonment of fanaticism for a predetermined idea and a complete expression of a sincere desire for the declaration of truth, no matter where it lies, as well as an invitation to discuss and listen to the other point of view, whether it lies within the domain of Islam or outside of it. In this example also lie the establishment of the different aspects of compassion and the wealth of variety that is deemed praiseworthy. Such a concept is alluded to in the saying, "disagreement among scholars is a mercy."

This sentiment or notion continued throughout the rightly-guided caliphate and was a reality that bore witness to a variety of different incidents and occurrences. These revealed the reality of Islam as a religion which interacts with people as human beings with dispositions that are a result of different factors ingrained into their nature by Allah and that result in different opinions and levels of understanding.

The purpose behind such differences of opinion, however, was the desire to arrive at the truth, and so disagreements did not become the cause of animosity or hatred between Muslims at the time. It is narrated that 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Azîz, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "It does not please me to see the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) not differ, for if it was one view (that they agreed upon) people would be in hardship."

The 'etiquette of disagreement' continued (in later centuries) to demonstrate the richness of (Islamic) culture and the onward thrust of the (Islamic) civilization, both of which were correlated with the depth of human experience and the breadth of its geographical boundaries.

Such differences of opinion did not, for instance, prevent the Imâms from praying behind one another. For instance, Abû Hanîfah and his companions as well as Ash-Shâfi'î and other Imâms, may Allah have mercy on them, prayed behind Imâms of Medina who followed the Mâlikî school as well as other Imâms, even if they did not adhere to the recitation of 'Al-Basmalah' (the saying of "Bismillâh Ar-Rahmân Ar-Rahîm [In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful]" in the beginning of the Sura of Al-Fâtihah [the Opening sura of Qur'ân] in either an audible or inaudible voice.

On another occasion when Ar-Rashîd (Hârûn Ar-Rashîd) led the prayers after having practiced cupping, Abû Yûsuf prayed behind him and did not repeat his prayer in spite of the fact that, in his opinion, cupping invalidates one's ablution (and hence one's prayer).

Along similar lines, Imâm Ahmad Ibn Hanbal saw that ablution was necessary after a nosebleed or cupping, and yet when he was asked whether or not he would pray behind Imâm (Mâlik) who had bled (and not made ablution) he replied, "How could I not pray behind Imâm Mâlik and Sa'îd Ibn Al-Musayyib?" In another instance, Imâm Ash-Shafi'î prayed the morning prayer in a place close to the grave of Abû Hanîfah, may Allah have mercy on him, and did not make invocation in the morning prayer in spite of the fact that, in Ash-Shâfi'î's opinion, it is an emphasized Prophetic *Sunnah* (i.e., a tradition that is constantly practiced by the Prophet), contrary to the opinion of Abû Hanîfah. When asked about this, he replied, "How could I act against his opinion while in his presence?" He also said, "Perhaps we should incline to the opinion of the jurists of Iraq."

In this manner, the Imâms understood differences in opinion to be a form of mercy, and therefore, did not compel people to adhere to one particular opinion or understanding as this went against the admissibility of interpretation, discretion and the existing universal code.

To this effect it should suffice us to mention one more historical incident that illustrates the extent to which the Imâms, during the era when Islamic civilization was propelled by faith and conviction, understood the necessity of freedom of opinion and the importance of steering away from bias, regardless of how certain they were of their opinions: Imâm Mâlik was perhaps the most knowledgeable and well-versed of the Imâms with regards to the Prophetic traditions narrated by the people of Medina, and the most reliable with regards to the chains of narration as well as the rulings of 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, the views of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ûd, 'Â'ishah and their counterparts from the Seven Jurists, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Furthermore, it was due to him as well as scholars like him that the science of narration of Prophetic traditions and jurisprudence was established; for he himself, may Allah have mercy on him, narrated such Prophetic traditions, issued *Fatwâs* and compiled his book, *Al-Muwatta'*, in which he intended to import that which was authentic from the Prophetic traditions of the people of Hejaz. In addition to this, he narrated (in *Al-Muwatta'*) that which he deemed authentic from the sayings of the companions and the first successors and arranged the chapters of his book in accordance to *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), thereby organizing it well and mastering its compilation. For forty years, *Al-Muwatta'* was considered the fruit of Imâm Mâlik's efforts, being the first book of *Hadîth* and *Fiqh* to appear in Islam and won the agreement of seventy contemporary scholars from Hejaz.

In spite of all this, when the Caliph Al-Mansûr requested that several copies of *Al-Muwatta'* be made and distributed among the different territories in order to direct the different people according to its rulings, and so avoid disagreement and a difference of opinion, Imâm Mâlik was the first to refuse this. It was narrated that he said, "Oh Commander of the Believers, do not do this, for the people have already been issued verdicts, heard Prophetic traditions and narrated different narrations; and each

community have taken that which they have already received from the different opinions expressed to them, so leave them to that which they have chosen for themselves," to which Al-Mansûr replied, "May Allah make you successful, Oh father of `Abdullah."

So, in spite of Al-Mansûr's intent to hold his populace to Imâm Mâlik's opinions and verdicts, Mâlik refused this and requested that each community be left to that which they had chosen for themselves without compulsion.

In this is a historical lesson that shows that it is not the right of anyone, ruler or Imâm, to impose a given opinion onto a given people or to compel them to follow it.

Furthermore, the history books, as well as biographies and books that have recorded some of the scholarly debates that have taken place throughout history, are filled with examples of this 'etiquette of disagreement'.

Indeed, a look at the literature that contains the heritage of the different schools of thought reveals the intensity of the brotherly and human ties that formed the fabric of mutual respect, amicability and understanding with regards to the different interpretations and views expressed by the first generations of scholars. The reason for this is that their goal was to deduce sound rulings that were appropriate for both the state of a people and the given problem they faced. Also, nothing prevented them from changing their opinions in the event that they saw the truth in someone else's view; this was due to the fact that they were free to interpret and not bound by a particular school of thought or a specific opinion.

Also, secondary issues that are concerned with deeds (as opposed to matters of creed) and subject to interpretation were considered harmless and safe by consensus. Indeed, they were considered a form of mercy for the nation and an indication of the flexibility of the Islamic law and breadth of Islamic jurisprudence.

In addition to this, differences of opinion train the mind to deduce a variety of different, demonstrative possibilities and hypotheses that may lead to a variety of different and appropriate solutions for people in different situations, which in turn provides ease and comfort within the limits of the religion.

It was only after the spread of blind imitation and after the doors of *ijtihâd* (legal reasoning) were closed, as well as the ensuing bias of the scholars for particular opinions and the freezing of their views that the 'etiquette of disagreement' began to disappear.

The view that differences of opinion are acceptable and lawful, and the encouragement of an etiquette within which these differences may be heard, as well as the opinion that such differences are one of Allah's universal norms and a sign of His Majesty, and that diversity in creation is a sign of His Wisdom, should not be taken as a pretext for discord between nations, peoples or individuals.

Rather, it should be an incentive for better understanding; Allah says:

> ***{"...and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."}*** [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Therefore, this mutual understanding is to enable cooperation, harmony, the exchange of benefit and benefaction and the enrichment of human life.

Another danger is when this difference of opinion becomes a cause of strife, discord, dispute and animosity between the members of the same nation, as Allah says:

> ***{"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."}***
>
> [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 46]

In order to avoid these dangers, the goal may change to become the deliberate abandonment of religious fundamentals and realities in an attempt to achieve personal goals or specific ambitions, as Allah says:

> ***{"...but if they turn away, they are only in dissension..."}***
>
> [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 137]

Such intentions only lead to injustice, as Allah says:

> ***{"... And indeed, the wrongdoers are in extreme dissension."}***
>
> [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 53]

Also, these evil goals and intentions result in cultivating tribulation between Muslims or between them and other nations. At such a point, differences or disagreements can no longer be considered a form of mercy. They cannot be considered diversity or the freedom to formulate opinions and interpret matters according to the available knowledge either.

Rather, this is a kind of difference of opinion that steers one away from the truth. It is a source of rivalry and tribulation as well as a reason for the destruction of the foundations upon which the unity of the nation rests.

Moreover, this kind of disagreement sews the seeds of mistrust for that which is sacred and essential in life, and pays no tribute to scholarly and scientific research that is unruffled because of its wisdom and built on objective standards.

Because of this, Allah, Exalted be He, has forbidden one to be involved in any discussion when He or His Prophet (PBUH) is being insulted; Allah says:

> ***{"And it has already come down to you in the Book [i.e. the Qur'ān] that when you hear the verses of Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation. Indeed, you would then be like them. Indeed, Allah will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in Hell all together."}*** [An-Nisā' (Women): 140]

This is because such exchanges lead one to drift towards falsehood and provoke feelings that may incite violence.

It is, hence, necessary for each individual within this nation to preserve the unity between Muslims; especially in these trying times where rival nations have called upon each other to prey on this nation at both the individual and social levels, attempting to extinguish the fire of faith and destroy the seeds of welfare that had begun to grow in spite of efforts to the contrary.

Similarly, it is necessary for us to eliminate everything that is harmful to this nation, no matter what, and to understand that one of the best forms of worship is to spread the spirit of brotherhood, since, through it, we are better able to confront the obstacles that prevent us from returning to a state that is pleasing to Allah, and pleasing to His Prophet (PBUH).

This idea does not contradict the right to differ or the right to have a different opinion; indeed it is through these differences that we may widen the horizons of exchange, discussion and freedom of expression. Such a right is, in itself, a value cherished by both culture and civilization, and provides the opportunity to listen attentively to the 'other', regardless of how much we may differ with them, as well as the opportunity to show respect for them as a human, and for their ideas and their beliefs.

Following from this, the different calls to prohibit people from joining discussions without being equipped with both knowledge and faith, from one side, and the emphasis on amenable human interaction - such as good manners - from another side, are enough to provide groundwork for peaceful co-existence and tolerance.

Essentially, "the goal of discussion is not just to sort out the different opinions or bring one party to agree with the opinions of the other. Rather, the most important goal is to enrich the intellect and to embed the value of tolerance between people as well as to pave the way for fruitful cooperation that will ultimately benefit all parties.

This is made possible by searching for points of agreement that will shape the solid foundations upon which constructive cooperation between different nations and peoples may be built. Discussion, in this sense, creates a cultural value that must be protected, adhered to and conveyed across all levels."

Another equally important goal of discussion is that it provides a medium through which the opinions of others may be not just heard, but understood; this is important as understanding the other side will prevent disputes that cause animosity.

A Muslim that aspires to put into practice the honorable Prophetic traditions for the benefit of the 'other' Muslim is – for that Muslim - like a sturdy building, each part of it supporting the other. But this aspiration will only be reached by applying the 'etiquette of disagreement', discussion and freedom of expression, and by transcending the limits set by a given school of thought or faction.

Also important is the emphasis on Islamic and amenable human interaction since constructive discussion does not exclude multiplicity, variety or a difference of opinion. On the contrary, it unifies the objectives and leads to extensive criticism without neglecting the set fundamentals needed to renew the education and information systems and awareness. It also leads to the establishment of the foundations of positive change, starting with the 'self'.

If the 'other' happens to be from a different nation, then it is necessary that any discussion with him bears the trait of freedom of thought, accompanied by confidence in one's independent ability to think.

Such a measure is necessary in order to prevent the possibility of collapse due to perceiving the 'other' as having grandeur and strength. This ultimately leads to the sapping of one's confidence and the dwindling of one's ability to think as well as one's ability to be a participant in the discussion. This then causes one to freeze and become a mere echo of the ideas received from the 'other'.

In reiteration of this point, the primary purpose of discussion between two opposing sides is not necessarily to come to an agreement, or for one side to attack the ideas of the other. Rather it is to accustom individuals and societies to respect cultural differences and different points of view, as well as to teach them how to co-exist in spite of these differences.

Differences of opinion and different opinions also lead to the establishment of understanding as being an essential component for the exchange between civilizations and such differences are not a reason for struggle and dispute, as some have claimed. Rather they are one of the vehicles through which cultures may become acquainted with one another - which is necessary due to the realities of multiplicity and variety.

For this reason, accepting discussion, at this current stage of our civilization, should be a sign of our cultural interaction and not one of an apologist or defensive stance used to confront accusations from the West or its aggressive policies. Nor should it be a means for threats and their ensuing resistance to continue or a means of compensating for material weakness.

Discussion must be something that emerges from the very foundations of this nation and be regarded as one of its primary issues. Moreover, it must be understood to be a means of expression and not an end in itself. It is also important for discussion to be accompanied by an awareness of any controversial dimensions in the arguments of the 'other', even if they be shrouded in objective discussion. An understanding of the effect of the balance of power in defining the issues that are to be discussed, the purpose behind discussing these issues and the actual results of the discussion, are also necessary accompaniments.

Likewise, it is important that the conditions for a fair and effective discussion be available, especially the kind of discussion applied at both official and ideological levels. Finally, it is essential that the pressures reality exerts upon officials are not passed onto thinkers and notables; for discussion is the current day form of *Jihâd* (fighting in the cause of Allah) and not the current day form of apology.

Another important condition for productive discussion is that Islamic dialogue must not take on an emotional or irritable tone and must not be tainted with accusations of infidelity. This is because none of these attitudes can influence or persuade others so as to ultimately make them able to comprehend the situation and nature of the problems and calamities that befall Muslims today. Nor can such attributes pull Muslims out of their current regression.

Such attitudes also fail to show or convince others about the reality of our sense of fairness and the universality of our message, as well as prevent us from conveying our human values to them. Without doubt, there is a significant faction of objective, neutral-minded people who are willing to be persuaded by calm, reasonable discourse that respects their intellect.

3. The lack of correlation between the educational curricula and reality

It is generally understood that the way of teaching in educational establishments reflects upon the individuals being taught. It so follows that if the cultural situation at both social and national levels suffers from rigidity, estrangement, a diminished ability to innovate, a weakened sense of discovery,

a retardation in the interpretive ability of the thinking and cultural elite, a disturbed sense of aesthetics, hesitancy in allowing freedom of opinion and a tendency towards fanaticism and single-mindedness, it becomes urgently necessary to look into, and review the current educational curricula.

This is especially true given the fact that education is, after the family, the primary factor in shaping the personality of individuals in the human society. A single look at education in Arab societies reveals, without exception, a tragedy in every sense of the word, for it is extremely weak, primitive and superficial. Furthermore, it does not rise to the level of historical progress, nor does it play any significant role in the process of upbringing; rather it is merely a means of attaining a given degree or certificate.

All of the currently implemented curricula have the common notion of disrespect for a student's intellect and his way of thinking, the overall confinement of their thoughts, as well as the disapproval of their questions, burial of their ambitions and the steering towards blind imitation and submission to the status quo.

Instead of education being a means of upbringing, aimed at developing mannerisms that characterize a civilized society and that work towards the preservation of human life, it becomes, in an indirect sense, a means of destroying it.

This is primarily because it allows the entry of aggressive ideologies that produce spite and feelings of negativity, ultimately leading to the elimination of the 'other' and a tendency to attack him by confiscating his freedom.

Also another characteristic of the current flawed education system is the alienation between social manners and the subjects presented, blind imitation, and the monotonous transfer of experiences and cultural benefits that are, in reality, subject to change. All this serves to exacerbate and increase the complexity and decline of the nation's affairs, ultimately driving it toward practices that are deemed irresponsible.

If we can say that children are deprived of the channels of discussion within the family due to their parents' preoccupation with their careers or other concerns, and that affable relationships geared towards the exchange and respect of opinions between parents and their children are not formed, then it is possible to say that schools and colleges currently exhibit the same phenomena.

For in such institutions, a student comes across information and concepts that are regarded as flawless, and finds that he is required to accept such concepts without question or criticism.

He also finds that his educator depends on methods of memorization and dictation that prevent the mind from positive interaction and constructive discussion, and this leads to rigidity and the prevalence of predetermined answers. He also loses his ability to think in a balanced and sound manner, ultimately reinforcing the grim reality that befalls us.

Worse than this, is the fact that the education system throughout the Arab world is far removed from the historical roots of the Arab nation, not to mention its present and its future. Indeed, the system itself may be regarded as an attempt to destroy the nation's precious values and praiseworthy manners, hence denying it the components of an honorable and peaceful life.

Additionally, such a system drives the society towards a complex and chaotic realm which is led by terrorist ideologies that prevent criticism, revision, comparison and disagreement from relying on the light of the Qur'ân and Prophetic tradition. This is of paramount importance as nothing is more firmly embedded in the individual and social conscience of our nation than Islam.

Education must be a means by which we may cultivate a way of thinking that conforms to the creed of our nation and its values, or a means by which these values may be established through both transmitted (i.e. revelation) and logical proofs, away from nonsense, deviation and complexity. Education must also exhibit the applicability of these values to the reality we live in, and to the requirements of evolution and renewal.

Further, it must rise with these values and bring forth admirable manners in the behavior of people, as well as serve to liberate their minds from the darkness of ignorance, blind imitation and fanaticism, and elevate them to the level of analysis and interpretation, innovation and criticism.

If education does not serve to carry out these tasks, it becomes a vehicle of destruction and deviation as well as the reinforcement of the present reality of regression and aggression.

The decline in the standard of education across Arab countries is nothing new. Indeed, it is something that has been around since the beginning of the 20th century, being cloaked in pretexts of ideological reform and renewal which, in turn, began to take shape in the 19th century as a result of the resistance against European colonialism.

In our present day, however, it has become an even more serious problem since the percentage of graduates that have given up their right to think and innovate currently comes close to 99% if not 100%.

When a nation is incapable of renewing the educational systems which normally assume the role of revitalizing and modernizing the society, it is unable to afford its individuals the opportunity to join the pioneering efforts of civil progress as a whole.

From here it is possible to say, "in spite of the availability of various resources that shape culture, education and upbringing continue to be the incubator or womb within which the seeds and the future of the required personality are sewn, and within which human tendencies are created and developed... Schools, institutes and universities will, hence, remain the societies of the future. So if any prospective strategies or outlooks, or any kind of vision for the people or societies of the future, as well as any view of the 'person of tomorrow' do not entail the establishment of appropriate curricula and their implementation in schools and institutes, then it will be of no avail."

This is because it is essential to make educational organizations centers of co-existence, dialogue and change as well as places where personalities may be armed with knowledge, understanding and any other vehicle of civil progress within an environment fortified by religious values and fundamentals. In this manner, individuals will be able to participate in dialogues that concern the changes and challenges they face, as well as to contribute in making decisions for themselves and for their nation.

If we want to establish the values of dialogue and the culture of tolerance and peace, and if we want to emphasize the role of the Islamic, Arabic civilization in building human civilization and in continuing to build the historical ties that have joined this civilization to various other civilizations, we must revise our current educational curricula.

4. Cultural Domination and the Drying out of Resources

Ever since the beginning of military occupation of the Islamic countries, our nation has struggled to rid itself of the military, political and ideological control. The currents of such domination and containment, however, were severe, and the ability to resist was weak, not based on a strong faith, sincere action or useful knowledge that could protect it from disintegration and collapse.

Since the downfall of the Eastern bloc in the late 1980s, the US-led Western world has moved towards the crystallization of a new world order that allows the world to be led single-handedly and that focuses the centers of power within its grasp. "This single-handedness, however, came as a surprise to the United States and was disconcerting to it as it had engineered its strength and built its framework according to the model of dual polarity that assumes the presence of competition or an enemy... The presence of such competition was a necessity that provided a pretext for its continued existence as well as reasons for its continuity...it, therefore, went about coercing the world to adjust to its vision, or one could say it began to re-customize the world to fit its needs."

It (the West) then went on to cling to its new enemy, the Islamic world, in order to continue making legitimate the very same aggressive policies that grant it the legitimacy to exercise its new form of Western domination of the world. Organized campaigns were launched in addition to what it already held in its inventory for the purpose of smearing the pictures of Muslims and Arabs and for the purpose of provoking them, something that has gone on for more than a quarter of a century. All of this was carried out in order to bring about a new and genuine global cold war with a new trait, often referred to as "the war of civilizations," or "the conflict of cultures," or "the struggle between civilizations."

In parallel with this, different efforts to announce, welcome and celebrate the West's liberal values that have become universal values forming a ceiling for humanity that can no longer be transcended or developed upon, were also made.

This is to say that the West, in a sense, has become the, "manufacturer of values of modernization and civilization, and it is this role that grants it rights over the rest of the world and at the helm of which is the right to lead. It is also through this that others are obligated towards certain duties, the most important of which is the adoption of its values, either due to incentives or threats."

Hence, efforts to direct the world towards a single culture, the culture of coercion and domination, as well as the imposition of certain values and the creation of mistrust for cultural differences or particularities persist.

Furthermore, political, military and economic goals have complemented cultural and ideological goals in an effort to gain complete control over the earth, its wealth and its cultural components. Also initiated are attempts to redesign the area (Middle East) in accordance to Western interests and culture, and in a way that serves the interests of Israel, a country that enjoys complete silence regarding its practice of terrorism, its crimes, the terrorism of the world superpower, and its racism, extremely important.

Also, if the political, military and economic control is clear in the reality of the Arab Islamic world and can be seen from its deep-rooted bloody history and instances of violence, aggression and annihilation, and its effect in weakening the nation and creating disunity, then the cultural control reveals the factors that have led to all this. A quick glance at (Arab) ideological and cultural literature as well as at the media (its content) shows that Arab and Islamic peoples continue to be vulnerable to continued domination.

Or as Mâlik Ibn Nabî, may Allah have mercy on him, would call it, "susceptibility to colonialism," that is a result of a predetermined strategy from both within and without aimed at removing Islam from the lives of its people via every possible means.

Other ploys include the creation of mistrust for the Islamic heritage, identity and values as well as the acceptance of Western ideologies and politics as universal standards. The pursuit of such goals has led to strong emotional responses that in turn either led to widespread instability or acts of aggression and violence as well as internal strife.

All of this, of course, has simply served to create new pretexts for more control and the continued depletion of material and moral resources.

In addition to this, the encouragement and cultivation of doctrinal and behavioral corruption, as well as the creation of an appropriate atmosphere for it to increase by the spread and outward show of obscenity, by rendering personal awareness as superficial, by diminishing the intellect as well as molding thought and dissolving decency through different media systems and other vehicles have all served to create an environment that encourages even more oppression and that produces extremism and counter extremism.

The powers of Western domination have, to a great extent, been successful in distorting the reality of Islam through the use of different means and in having it perceived as the imminent danger that wages war on civilization, evolution and modernization. Irresponsible practices attributable to some Muslims have aided these efforts to distort Islam and ultimately cultivated more spite and hatred for this religion.

Perhaps the best weapon in combating such efforts of distortion is the presentation of shining role models that represent the true Islam that is built on the Glorious Qur'ân and authentic Prophetic traditions and that honors, for instance, the value of moderation. It may be that the Muslim minorities in the West will play this active role and portray an example of the righteous Muslim who extends links (to the 'other') with his outstanding Islamic manners, thereby re-emphasizing the concept of moderation and the delicate relationship between the material and the spiritual.

One who sets such an example is one who forms relationships that respect others as human beings, appreciates their thoughts and values, and presents Islam by means that are appropriate to reality through the use of kind words, fair preaching and in a way that is best. In this way one is able to reach minds and hearts without the use of pressure or coercion.

Another effective remedy is to regard dialogue as a bridge towards understanding and coexistence. Dialogue is also a means through which one may call others to Islam and provides a safe and peaceful sanctuary for people of different nationalities, customs, religions and dispositions. No

matter how tyrannical or oppressive a person may be, kind words and leniency are still the first line of action in the attempt to wade into the depths of his mind. However, while divine instructions are and will continue to be the appropriate manner when addressing tyrants and oppressors, one should not sit in anticipation for the fruits of such an address as they lie within the Will of Allah alone: Allah says:

{"Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]."} [Ṯâ-Hâ: 43, 44]

These are the values that reveal that Islamic discourse, which finds its roots in the Qur'ân and Prophetic traditions, is not aggressive in nature; rather it is reconciliatory, peaceful, respectful of humanity and receptive of the 'other'.

This, however, does not mean that our nation is to submit to racist, extremist force, or refrain from responding to the attacks that it faces. Nor does it mean that Islam is to be drained of its combative components or the concept of *Jihâd* and that only those aspects involving spirituality and manners are to be stressed. Rather it is important that the following Qur'anic verses be implemented correctly, with *Jihâd* placed in its proper context along with the other verses that call to leniency and benevolence. This is clear in the following verses:

{"And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows..."} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 60]

{"And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah..."} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 61]

{"...So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 194]

{"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do

not fight them at Al-Masjid Al-Harâm until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 190, 191]

In contemplating these verses, we find that confrontation through the use of force and killing comes only after having exhausted all peaceful and defensive means. Otherwise, the principle of love is the basis of every human relationship in Islam. This is an unwavering principle, for we are taught even to love our enemies and to talk to them in a manner that is best so that they may perhaps turn to be dear and cherished friends.

The trials of the nation through the calamities and catastrophes that have befallen it, including the calamity of occupation – the psychological or ideological occupation, or the occupation of land and resources – appeal to it, more than ever before, to enact the processes of revision and criticism so as to create ideological basic changes in the Muslim nation of today.

This is largely because centuries of regression and domination by an ideology which is regarded as unquestionable and irreplaceable has rendered the current historical ideological system as something sacred and *Ijtihâds* (legal reasoning) arrived at in the past centuries as still being ideal standards for today's situation.

Further, the nation's desire to rid itself of this control has caused it to fall into yet another form of domination that is even more destructive, bringing to mind the words of 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, "We are a people whom Allah has honored with Islam, and so if we seek honor in anything other than Islam, we will be dishonored by Allah."

The changes taking place in the world around us are large and very complex, for this reason it is necessary that initiatives for revision or criticism be conducted with a high level of awareness of the calamity that has befallen us, our sciences, our curricula and our relationships. Such initiatives must also take place accompanied by a strong level of innovation and renewal, and must also be accompanied by guidelines for ideological and intellectual training in all cultural structures.

Also necessary, is productive correspondence with cultural and intellectual organizations, both Arab and international, as well as the enactment

of guidelines for genuine scientific dialogue between researchers and those involved with presenting the renewed Islamic discourse that emanates from a comprehensive vision and understanding.

This, in turn, will give birth to different subsidiary systems that are behavioral, political, economic and aesthetic in nature. It will also correct misconceptions and liberate one from the existing, dominant cultural reality as well as from the existing ideological models, thereby bringing about a return to the flawless principles of the Qur'ân and Prophetic traditions in view of current affairs.

It is important for the Muslim intellect to hold onto the "flawless standards and fundamentals derived from the revelation that provide a focal point for his mindset and a reference and that grant him the ability to appraise, rectify, reform and continually revise, as well as protect himself from all attempts of cultural segregation or demarcation."

It is also important for this intellect to understand the universality of its religion and to be able to establish its communicative notions in a language understood by others and in a way that moves and influences them.

This is achievable by being concerned with issues and problems that are important to them, the circumstances within which they live, the hopes that entice them and the goals that exist in their hearts. This is the style of those who have resolved to alleviate and do away with the weight of hatred and violence; it is the style of those who seek to break the limitations and undo the chains that hold humanity back.

In this regard, Allah says:

> ***{"...and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them..."}*** [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 157]

It is also the style of those who wish to alleviate injustice and tyranny and spread peace, freedom and justice in the society in which they live, first, and then between people throughout the world, and also wish to take a strict and firm stance against those who commit crimes against humanity and deny people their rights. This, in essence, is the style of those who carry the burden of resurrecting a nation.



Absence of Justice Is the Source of Extremism



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Societies can never be established on injustice. Allah, Exalted be He, supports the just state even if it is a disbelieving one. By the same token, Allah abandons the unjust state even if it is a Muslim one. The best way to prevent extremism is to establish justice and give others their rights, be they financial, personal, political, etc.

In the present time, 'Extremism' is a term recurrently used by writers, politicians, cultured persons and the mass media, particularly after the September 11th, 2001 and its consequences.

The term "Extremism" is derived from the word "extreme" which refers to:

1. Most remote in any direction, outermost or farthest.

2. Extending far beyond the norm.

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy on him) was among the first to use the Arabic equivalent of the term 'Extremism' a long time ago. He said, "That is, the reason behind the extremist attitude of those people..."[1] In another example, he said, "Some people do not refer to the two extreme views..."

Nowadays, the term 'Extremism' has become so unspecific that it has very many implications. This is because the meaning of any term or concept in any language is usually affected by the social and human circumstances as well as long-term events that eventually result in special functions and definitions being introduced to such a term or concept (when it is used in its environment), whether they are accepted by society or not.

The vagueness of any term is a strong reason for difference in opinions, the change of a quiet dialogue into a heated reproach in the face of deaf people. In other words, everybody tries to define 'Extremism' according to his or her own perspective.

"Virtue is a state that lies between two vices" as said by Aristotle. Also, it is "the good deed that lies between two evils" as many Muslim scholars, such as Al-Ghazâlî, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibnul-Qayyim and others, stated.

(1) *"Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ"* (Collection of *Fatwâs*) by Ibn Taymiyyah.

Moreover, moderation – which is the symbol of balance and virtue – is one of the meanings of the expression 'the just nation' mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ân in the Verse in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Thus We have made you [true Muslims], a just (and the best) nation..."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

Interpreting this Verse, Ibn 'Abbâs (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Allah made you a just, moderate nation." Imâm 'Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The best people are those who represent this moderate nation, so that other people will follow their footsteps and extremists give up immoderation and adopt the median approach."

Accordingly, if one assumes the high value of 'moderation,' then one can define the orientations of others according to this position (e.g., rightists, leftists, extreme rightists, extreme leftists, extremists or moderates).

We, however, have the right to consider this as a form of over self-consciousness and self-esteem which makes one see oneself as having a balanced judgment and outlook, or an attempt to force one's views on others without giving them a choice.

There are some people who are intellectually and psychologically moderate. This is a noble value and precious grace. Hence, scholars used to consider 'justice' as the loftiest virtue. This justice means that all one's feelings are well-balanced and in harmony, and one is not controlled by one's whims but acts according to reason. This results in no one feeling being dominant over the other feelings. Accordingly, there will be a balance between the attitude of the mind and the actions of the self (i.e., feelings).

In addition to the above-mentioned category, there are people who are naturally nervous and irritable because one character predominates, such as anger or desire, over the others. As a result, these people suffer a lack of a balanced mind and feelings. Sometimes, the mind may oppressively control the self, ignoring its feelings, or vice versa. Here, the loss of balance generates immoderate systems which negatively affect the methodology of thinking, education, knowledge and science.

One's nature is closely related to the scientific and practical choice that one often takes, unless one is resisted by a greater and more effective force.

Consequently, one's choices, opinions, behavior and life as a whole are harmonious as they spring from one source.

Fortunately, the majority of people have a moderate lifestyle and this can be seen in their characters. Moderation is not merely a single formula; rather, it is a general frame encompassing different classes of people.

The natural inherent instinct which many people have to be moderate is demonstrated by their readiness to accept, adhere and submit to the truth. However, this kind of readiness is useless unless it is influenced by Divine guidance. That is why the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* liken the Revelation to rain, the self which is ready to be guided like the fertile land, the humble heart is like the live land and the heart which is heedless (of Allah's reminder) is like the dead land. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> ***{"Has not the time come for the hearts of those who believe [in the Oneness of Allah] to be affected by Allah's reminder [this Qur'ân], and that which has been revealed of the truth, lest they become as those who received the Scripture [the Torah and the Injîl (Gospel)] before [i.e. Jews and Christians], and the term was prolonged for them and so their hearts were hardened? And many of them were Fâsiqûn [the rebellious, the disobedient to Allah]."}*** [Al-Hadîd (Iron): 16]

Then He says:

> ***{"Know that Allah gives life to the earth after its death! Indeed, We have made clear the Ayât [proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelation, etc.] to you, if you but understand."}***
>
> [Al-Hadîd (Iron):17]

In his interpretation, Ibn Kathîr said, "This indicates that Allah, Exalted be He, makes hearts humble and lenient after being hard; He guides the misguided one and removes hard distresses..."

Abû Mûsâ Al-Ash`arî narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The example of the guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil, which absorbed the rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance (and) another portion of it was dehydrated (dried out), (so) it held (absorbed) the rain water and Allah benefited the people with it; they utilized it for drinking, supplying their animals with water and irrigating (their land). Also some of it (the rain) fell on a portion of it which was barren which could neither hold (absorb) the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The former is an example of the person who comprehends Allah's religion, gets benefit from the knowledge which Allah has revealed through me, learns it and then teaches others; and the latter is an example of a person who does not care for it (Allah's religion) and does not accept Allah's guidance which has been revealed through me."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî, Muslim and Ahmad]

According to this, 'moderation' is based on two pillars:

First: Sincere adherence to Allah's Revelation and the Prophetic *Sunnah* as well as referring to the Revelation for everything, be it major or minor.

Second: Acceptance to such adherence which means being naturally and innately ready to accept it.

According to one of the interpretations of the following verse, Revelation is like a light while a person accepting it is like a niche from which light is spread out. Therefore, Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, says[1]:

{"...The parable of His light is as [if there were] a niche and within it a lamp..."} [An-Nûr (The Light): 35]

Moreover, Revelation is like rain while acceptance is like the fertile land that receives that rain, as mentioned in some other texts.

(1) Ibn Kathîr's Interpretation of the Qur'ân, 3/290

Accordingly, the standard here is the Divine Revelation of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. This argument has been adopted by the moderate scholars of Islam throughout all times and in all places. This is clear in the *Mursal* (Attributed to the Prophet by the Companions' Follower) *Hadîth* that states:

> *"This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, deception of the falsifiers and distortion of the extremists."*(1)

This text, as well as other similar texts, shows that just and moderate people, who are guided by the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, follow the right path; the path to which the misled are returned.

Also, this is shown in the Sura of *Al-Fâtihah* (The Opening Chapter) in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds (mankind, jinn and all that exists). The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful. The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection). You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help. Guide us to the Straight Way. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who have earned Your Anger, nor of those who have gone astray."}***
>
> [Al-Fâtihah (The Opening Chapter): 2-7]

Here, Allah, Exalted be He, mentions the moderate sect that follows the ***"Straight Way,"*** then He mentions the contrary sects that have been misled, such as those who have evoked Allah's wrath and those who are astray. This indicates the importance of establishing good and practical examples of such moderate behavior by actually applying it, instead of considering it just a mere theory.

In fact, immoderation, in all its forms, is the exception that reinforces and stresses the importance of the rule (i.e., moderation). That is why the Prophet (PBUH) warned Muslims against being immoderate, as narrated by Ibn `Abbâs (may Allah be pleased with him) in the *Hadîth* in which the Prophet (PBUH) said:

(1) See *"At-Tamhîd"* 1/59.

"Use pebbles similar to these (for throwing during Hajj), and beware against exaggeration in your religion, for those before you were destroyed because of their exaggeration in religion."[1]

Causes of Extremism

The following points are among the most important causes of extremism:

1. **Intellectual Crisis.** In the present time, the Muslim world has two main contradicting trends:

- **The first trend** is represented by secularism. This trend is widely practicing extremism. Not only does it insist on transferring the Western attitude to the Muslim community, but it also clones the Western societies to the Muslim world and aims to establish a materialistic system of life, excluding the fundamental aspects of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and even the noble social heritage. This trend views these fundamentals and heritage as big obstacles in the way of progress, civilization and advancement.

- **The second trend** contradicts the former one. It refuses all forms of modernization and views them as means that stand in the way between man and his Lord. This is because it portrays modernization as a means of corrupting the religion, and, accordingly, causing man to be opportunist and selfish.

  Each trend has opposing reactions towards the other. This is in addition to the absence of any dialogue or insightful, constructive thinking.

2. **Ignorance or misunderstanding of the goals of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*** and Divine commandments in addition to applying the texts of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* inappropriately.

3. **The deterioration of the economical level of countries and individuals.** This has negative effects on the people. Globalization has overwhelmed the whole world and generated economical crises. These crises have resulted in a failure to undertake any serious international cooperation or to settle such economical and social problems.

(1) Related by An-Nasâ'î, Chapter on *"Hajj Rituals"*.

4. **Incredibility of many governments and political systems** due to their claims that they have ideals and values, while, in fact, their actions towards their people contradict this.

5. **The lack of the implementation of the Islamic *Sharî`ah* in many Islamic countries.** Unfortunately, most of the extremist trends raise the banner of judging by what Allah has revealed.

   Actually, this is a truthful motto in itself; however, the problem lies in its consequences. Previously, Kharijites said, "Judgment belongs only to Allah." Hereupon, `Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) replied with his famous words, *"These are truthful words through which falsehood is sought."*

   The absence of a religious reference or authority in the Muslim societies in addition to the weakness of both the role of Muslim scholars and religious discourse are all matters that have caused these societies to live in an endless prevalent chaos. These factors have also contributed to the absence of any concept of identity:

   - Are we an Arab Muslim nation, with a Divine *Shar`î* reference, coping with the developments of the present day?
   - Are we a Western nation that depends on the ideas and life patterns presented to us by the "other"?
   - Are we one nation, even if our countries and homes are many? Or are we different nations with no relation tying us together?

   A poet said about the Islamic *Ummah*:

   Renaissance is sought by every nation,
   While your structure is in separation,
   One nation you were in the past,
   Alas! How have you become divided so fast!

6. **The societal disintegration** represented by the absence of the roles of the family, school and supportive educational environments in many fields. This has resulted in many psychological disorders and various deviations.

Many studies have proved that the youth's tendency towards extremism is the result of psychological causes, including the lack of necessary needs, unstable emotional growth or deprivation of one's parents, especially the mother. Therefore, 78% of the causes leading to the emergence of these groups are results of individuals' psychological deprivation.

7. **The mass media,** including satellite channels, the Internet, magazines, newspapers, etc., through which a large amount of corrupting materials is disseminated. This is in addition to the absence of any constructive or reformative views in the media due to their zeal to attract the audience's hearts and amass money.
8. **Misunderstanding religious meanings** and applying them incorrectly, such as the concept of asceticism, *Jihâd* (fighting in Allah's cause), loyalty (to Islam and its rules), distance (from disbelievers), etc. Other points include misunderstanding the rules applying to the rights and duties of *Dhimmis*(1) in addition to the lack of job opportunities in many countries that lead the youth to resort to educational environments which do not have a good educational standard and do not fit in with the limits of the *Sharî'ah.*

Methods of Treatment

Extremism, which means "to exceed the limits of Divine justice and human nature," is a true crisis. The history of civilizations shows many examples of such extremism. In this respect, the Message of Islam is the earliest and most perfect model to deal with this kind of deviation. Nevertheless, our aim here is not to discuss the reactions of the West nor exchange characteristics and descriptions with it or with the rest of the world.

Such a battle may not be imperative and may not bring anything positive in our favor. The important thing here is to realize the significance of spreading awareness among the members of the *Ummah* (Muslim nation) in order to recognize extremist views that lie outside the Islamic frame. After careful insight, one realizes that the West promotes the industry of extremism and exports it to other countries. Some parties may be consum-

(1) A non-Muslim living in and under the protection of a Muslim state.

ers of such extremism. Here, we have to know that the crisis does not lie in the extremist views of some parties, but it, actually, lies in the international security that will be threatened when extremism becomes legitimate. This is represented by some political circles and powerful organizations in the West, whose influence may affect various circles. Undoubtedly, the Jewish example is the one that will be worldly chosen to represent extremism if the peoples are granted the freedom of expression right.

In spite of that, we also have to clearly criticize extremism within our Islamic society. I was attracted to the statement of Imâm Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on him) about the Kharijites in which he said, "The *Hadîth* of the Prophet (PBUH) about them is authentic according to five perspectives." The authenticity of *Hadîths* warning against the Kharijites is unanimously agreed upon by scholars of *Hadîth*. Such *Hadîths* are related in the two *Sahîhs* (Authentic Books of *Hadîth*) of Al-Bukhârî and Muslim, As-Sunan, Al-Musnads and others. Scholars of *Hadîth* have stated the authenticity of such *Hadîth* while there are no other authentic *Hadîth* that warn against a particular deviated sect. This is due to the following reasons:

1. The danger of this *Fitnah* (dissension) and that it will exist to the end of time as well as its consequences of shedding blood, killing, destroying societies, startling the innocent and distorting the image of Islam in the eyes of the Muslims and non-Muslims. Such results and consequences have been witnessed continuously since the emergence of the Kharijites.
2. This sect is among the sects of Adherents of the *Sunnah*. Thus, it attempts to associate itself with the same original base to which the nation belongs by adhering to the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, and observing worship, asceticism, courage, truthfulness and resolution to adhere to the religion. This matter makes their behavior not clear, and that is why people sometimes hesitate to disapprove of their behavior, pleading about their good intentions and sincere goals. However, the consequences of their deviation and corruption do not only afflict them, but they also affect others, due to the fact that they indiscreetly infiltrate into the Muslim nation.

There are some proposed solutions:

First: Enabling the Muslim scholars to fulfill their responsibilities by opening before them the channels of media and communication, exploiting the nation's capabilities to serve this purpose, and linking the youth of the Muslim nation to reliable scholars via open meetings and making it easy to communicate with them (the scholars). Moreover, it is necessary for the Muslim scholars and *Faqîhs* (religious jurists) to bear in mind that they represent the real reference for everyone: the ruler and the ruled.

Second: Establishing scientific, *Da'wah* (calling to Islam) and media channels through which the true image of Islam will be apparent, people can know about their true religion, and trends of violence can be freely discussed. Unless the right Islamic *Da'wah* is presented in accordance with the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, the alternative will be two matters:

1. The spread of uncensored moral and intellectual corruption that leads to extremism.
2. Deviated movements that infiltrate amongst the people.

Third: Refining mass media from all that is contrary to Islam – creed, rulings and morals – as well as preventing victims of any deviated thoughts from slipping into it, protecting Islam and Muslims, and forming an Islamic way of information to support *Da'wah*.

Fourth: Adjusting the educational curricula according to the religion of the Muslim nation in a way that links them to its history, present and future. As a result, a believing generation, that knows its religion and duties well and acts accordingly, will emerge.

Fifth: Reforming religious and moral conditions in the Muslim societies and protecting them from moral deterioration. This is in addition to supporting and establishing the reforming institutions based to protect morals. Just as there is an agency dedicated to fighting drugs, it is necessary to set up empowered and authorized agencies to fight the various crimes rejected by the *Sharî'ah* (Islamic Law).

Sixth: Necessity of observing justice and giving people their rights, whether financial, personal, political, etc. Societies can never be based on injustice. Allah, Exalted be He, supports the fair state even if it is a disbelieving one, but He abandons the unjust state even if it is a Muslim one.

Seventh: Preachers of Islam and the rightly-guided scholars have to be clear and sincere in their call. They should never hesitate to reject and condemn the wrong, whatever its source, in a clear language using evidence (from the Qur'ân, *Sunnah* and righteous sayings) and show the bad consequences of deviation. This should be done calmly, using wisdom and good advice as stated by Allah, the Almighty, and avoiding resorting to excessiveness in treating extremism, accusing others of disbelief or cursing them. This is based on the reality that Muslim scholars constitute an authority and a reference, which necessitates rationality, justice, precision and soundness of judgment.

We ask Allah for guidance!



Freedom of Thought Versus Extremism



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To stop the promotion of extremism and authoritarianism we can only resort to the opposite direction. Freedom is believed to be the best way to deal with extremism in general and the religious one in particular. Facts of objective logic, history and current events all together make one certain about this belief.

Foreword

Although many parties in the world nonobjectively look at and unfairly employ the phenomenon of extremism in relation to Islam, it is actually an existent phenomenon that has a great impact on events, whether on the national or international levels. Rather than leaving it for the consideration of others, and hence having it wrongly interpreted and unfairly manipulated, Muslims themselves should pay adequate attention to and ponder on the issue, exploring its causes and solutions. They are the best to do so because it is a phenomenon from which they suffer and whose consequences affect them more than anybody else.

Since this is the complex product of several contributing factors (social, religious, political, etc.), study of the issue should be based on a proper scientific approach and great effort should be taken to come to a sound solution. Unfortunately, despite the phenomenon's complexity and dangerousness, we have not perceived it this way so far. The most that is said about the phenomenon of extremism is just denunciation, or, at best, an exploration and presentation of the consequences. A well-crafted study of the causes of extremism and the specification of an effective remedy are almost absent when dealing with the phenomenon. At best, a little light is thrown on the phenomenon in a way that has no effect with such a great challenge that faces the entire society and threatens its future stability and development.

We think it is time, if not too late, to scientifically study the phenomenon of extremism, whether general or religious, in the Muslim community, clarify its causes and diagnose the remedy. An integrated consideration of the psychological, social and religious aspects should be implemented to formulate a clear idea that will lead to a successful solution, rather than

being restricted to condemning the consequences of extremism and only relying on security interventions, which only cause it to get worse and worse, as is the case today.

A careful contemplation of the phenomenon of extremism as it prevails in Muslim nations, and the linking of it to similar problems, indicate that the phenomenon is a very intricate one. It has complex causes and strongly intertwined roots that are deep in the mentality of the public and make up social interaction. A subtler scrutiny, however, reveals that one single root is the most obvious and recurrent among these. Being the most influential factor behind the creation, continuation and expansion of the phenomenon, authoritarianism or dictatorship is prominent in different fields: ideological, political, economic, etc.

After this largest factor is recognized, accepted as real and powerful, described correctly, and of course attributed to its agent, a basic step would have been taken to scrutinize the problem, upon which the subsequent step (a remedy) can be built. In fact, to stop it from producing extremism, authoritarianism can only be dealt with by its opposite. Freedom is believed to be the best way to deal with extremism in general, and particularly the religious one. This is supported by abstract logic, history and current events which altogether clearly verify this perception.

Although the dictatorship which generates extremism has several types, one of them seems to be the most influential component in the generation of extremism which is currently present in the Muslim nations; i.e. ideological dictatorship. It is an internally effective component that is constituted from within the ideological background itself of the cultural system in which the individual is subjected to dictatorship, which propels him towards extremism. This becomes a general trend when dictatorship affects large numbers of the public through their upbringing, education and socialization. Since it touches the core of the structure of the culture, it is a component of absolute danger. To deal with it, a lot of effort needs to be exerted for a long period of time. Effective treatment can only be achieved by liberating the individual and community ideologically from the harsh upper hand of dictatorship. This is what we will try to explain in the following discussion.

Authoritarianism and Extremism

Approaches dealing with the concept of religious extremism range from being too general to being too specific. Some consider religiousness as a kind of extremism, while others maintain that this so-called extremism is in reality the one and only true religion. In addition, the authoritarianism-extremism relationship may not be intrinsically clear. For example, it may be claimed, "What relationship can be assumed between political authoritarianism practiced by rulers against their people and the individual religious attitudes, beliefs and behavior for such attitudes to be considered extremist or not?" or, "What is the connection between employing a scientific methodology for religious education and the extremist ideology of those who receive this education so that the former is said to have led to the latter?" Therefore, such concepts should be precisely defined for the subsequent discussion of causes and solutions to be easily understood.

a) Extremism and Religious Extremism

Linguistically, the word extremism means the inclination to the extremes beyond the midpoints. For example, in the *Hadîth* on the "Torture in Grave", the Prophet (PBUH) passed by two graves and said that the two people in them were being tortured. Regarding the reason for the torture of one of them, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"He did not go to an extreme to urine."[1]

This means that the man did not go to a remote place to urinate.

By the same token, the word extremism is used to mean holding beliefs that are exaggerated or extended far beyond the norm. Extremists are persons who go too far in their attitudes or behavior. Religious extremists, in turn, are those who exaggerate to the utmost in their religious beliefs and practices.

The Qur'ân and *Sunnah* mention this state of some religious people. The description used is not extremism but "excess in religion". Allah says:

(1) For the full *Hadîth*, see Ibn Hajar, "*Fath Al-Bâri*" (the Bestowal of the Creator), Cairo, Dâr Ar-Raiyyân Lit-Turâth, 1986 (1/380).

{"O People of the Scripture (Christians)! Do not commit excess in your religion, nor say of Allah aught but the truth..".}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 171]

The word "excess" means exceeding the proper limits. Excess in religion implies that "a religious person goes beyond the limits set by the religion."[1] In a *Hadîth*, the meaning was described as "meticulousness". The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Ruined are those who indulge in meticulous religiousness."[2]

This refers to people who are excessively austere in their religion.

The meaning of excessiveness and meticulosity used in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* can be taken as the meaning of extremism. Religious extremism, thus, can be defined as the state of adopting beliefs and practices as part of a religion while in reality they exceed the limits set by the religion itself or seek the stricter view when the context implies other easier choices. Extremists not only stick to this exaggerated approach, but also obligate others to do the same.

Religious extremism may vary in degree. The least degree is when an extremist takes his religious approach as only a personal view, but he does not deny others' right to have their own understanding of religion. He shows an open-minded attitude towards them, on the basis that his beliefs are considered right but they may possibly be wrong, and others' beliefs are considered wrong but they may possibly be right. This kind of extremism has limited negative effects; at worst, it results in some wrong understanding of religion which may hinder the social interaction of the extremists themselves. Indeed, any flaw in individual religiousness causes problems in the extremist's social (interactions or abilities). The Prophet (PBUH) said:

(1) Ibn 'Âshûr, *"At-Tahrîr Wa At-Tanwîr"* (Liberation and Enlightenment), Tunisia, Ad-Dâr At-Tunisiyyah Lin-Nashr, undated, 6/51.

(2) Related by Muslim, Chapter on *"Al-'Ilm"* (i.e. Knowledge), Section of "Ruined are those who indulge in meticulous religiousness".

"This is a firm religion, so penetrate into it gently, and do not make worshipping Allah too hard for you (by exhausting yourself in worship). (This is because) the traveler who exhausted his ride did not reach his destination nor spare his beast."[1]

Extremism may move up to a higher level when an extremist holds his perception of religion firmly, considering it the ultimately true belief that cannot be wrong and considering the belief of others as an absolutely wrong view which cannot possibly be right. Nevertheless, he applies his beliefs only to himself and does not advocate them publicly. This is more dangerous because such extremists think that they really follow the true belief while others are completely misguided. They may end up judging others as disbelievers or, at least, deviants. Although this may remain hidden and not stated openly, it still has bad effects; extremists will treat others who do not share their opinions very badly, whether intentionally or not, in terms of intrapersonal and interpersonal conformity.

The next level is when an extremist does not confine his opinions to himself but promotes them publicly as the only right doctrine and disapproves of other opinions, regarding them as disbelief or fallacy. This approach is a propagandist one for which media tools and efforts are utilized. Groups and organizations may be created to promote it as the only truth and undermine the opposite as false. In this condition, negative effects of extremism are severer because they lead to social dissension and disunity among Muslims.

The highest and most dangerous level is when an extremist uses violence to impose his opinions, which he considers right, on others, or he may commit violent behavior due to frustration, retaliation or by applying religious teachings although he has no authority, such as *Jihâd* (fighting for the cause of Allah), enforcing legal punishments, etc. Here, extremism can be called "terrorism". This kind of extremism produces bad effects on the whole society: Bloody clashes, aggression against lives and properties, destructive disorders that stop societal development, etc. It may even affect religion itself as these practices are seen to be committed in the name of

(1) Related by Al-Bayhaqî in his Book Sunan Al-Bayhaqî, Chapter on "*As-Salâh*" (i.e. Prayer), Section of "Moderateness in Worship".

religion. In consequence, many people may think that a religion like this is not worth being followed. It will be doubtful and rejected, and the call to it will incur a severe relapse.

These levels of extremism are not isolated from each other. They are so interchangeable that the first level frequently results in the last one. In fact, they are just degrees of belief according to how the extremist views religion; the deeper this belief goes into his heart, the more his extremism will move up from one level to another. Terrorism in the name of religion is the product of a wrong understanding that goes beyond the limits set by religion itself, this develops into a belief that it is the only sound doctrine, then there is further development so it becomes advocated and ends up being supported by violence. In this manner, the first level often leads to the last one, depending on what heightens the formative and supportive elements, as will be explained later.

b) Authoritarianism's Causation of Extremism

Linguistically, the word "authoritarianism" means the state of having absolute and exclusive authority over something. Conventionally, the word is widely used to describe the exclusive seizure of a right by a body, whether individual or group, from other bodies. Thus, the seizure of a material right, such as national wealth, is called "economic authoritarianism"; the seizure of the right to express one's opinion on political issues is called "political authoritarianism"; the seizure of the right of freedom of thought is called "ideological authoritarianism"; etc. For example, 'Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) said about his right to hold the Caliphate: "We believed that we had a right to this matter (i.e. Caliphate) but you were authoritarian with us." He means that they seized the Caliphate while it was his right to take it.

Authoritarianism, in this sense, has a strong relationship with religious extremism, a relationship that is made up of psychological problems, different religious interpretations or cultural influences. These all, however, come to one end, i.e. the generation of extremism in various degrees. After all, these elements suggest that religious extremism is just the product of authoritarianism of these channels. There maybe others, but these remain the clearest causes of extremism. This point needs more clarification.

Relief of Feelings

Authoritarian seizure of rights and deprivation of others' rights can create feelings of oppression and injustice among the victims of dictatorship. These feelings can generate an inclination or willingness to resist and remove such dictatorship and obtain one's deserved rights. Although circumstances often disable this willingness and prevent the retrieval of rights, the inclination remains latent in people's minds but shows itself up in different pictures: e.g., plans and wishes. There arise thoughts that the currently denied rights will hopefully be obtained in the future. When these thoughts are given a religious sense, they become part of the religious beliefs of those who are deprived of rights; which, in fact, is a form of religious extremism.

This applies to many religious groups which have been described as extremist both in the past and recent times. For example, many groups suffered political authoritarianism and were deprived of the right to participate politically, so they relieved their feelings by expecting a future time when one of them would come to power, terminate authoritarianism and establish justice. Such ideas as *Ghaybah* and *Raj'ah* (the Absence and Return; false beliefs of the Shiites that their Imâm is absent and that one day he will return to spread justice all over the world after ages of injustice) become part of their religious beliefs.

Likewise, there are modern groups who, under political authoritarianism, hold a strict belief that politics, in general, is not in harmony with religiousness. So they completely ignore politics and consider engaging in political work as vain. This is an excess beyond the comprehensiveness of religion, whose teachings are connected to every aspect of life, including politics.

A third type of group take the opposite way. Under oppression and humiliation, they feel deep resentment and grudge against their oppressors, so their first concern is to retaliate in any possible way. They use impugnation and accusations of disbelief against oppressors, or they conduct violent actions, like killing people, destroying properties and appropriating other's money. For them, this is a religious conception according to which they call others to Islam.

Many of the current acts of violence adopted by some religious groups are probably caused by this release of feelings which is the product of political authoritarianism, oppression, large-scale imprisonment and torture. Some of these groups acquired such ideas of retaliation and accusations of disbelief in prison. Originally, they had sound thoughts and moderate religious perceptions. But because of ferocity and humiliation, their beliefs were twisted by strong feelings of resentment, favoring the severest ideology of accusing rulers of disbelief as well as those who do not resist them, or abandoning the so-called disbelievers' society and forming isolated, social units established upon piety and religiousness. When they get out of prison, members of these groups rush into an outburst of killing, not only against rulers but also against peaceful tourists who visit other countries only for enjoyment. After a cruel massacre committed in Luxor, Egypt in which many tourists were killed, one of the perpetrators said that he acted so because he, under severe feelings of oppression, was overwhelmed by a wild desire to kill everyone who had any connection, whether close or remote, with the regime, and he also felt he had nothing to lose.

Therefore, it is authoritarianism that causes extremism in its utmost degrees.

Religious Interpretations

Comprehensive as it is, Islam deals with every human behavior, outlining its religious rulings. Thus, resistance to dictatorship is a religious obligation, and so is the defense and retrieval of rights. Any failure of doing so is nonobservance of a religious requirement. Once religious people understand this, it will govern all their behavior. When conflict is heightened between the right, represented by those who defend rights and resist oppression, and authoritarianism, the notion of superiority will create interpretations that justify beliefs and deeds that exceed the limits of religious teachings but take a religious outline. Thus, extremism starts within the conflict between right and wrong due to distorted interpretations.

There are many past and contemporary examples of this. *Kharijites* (The Seceders) sects believe that Muslim rulers have become dictators, so they decided resolutely to resist dictatorship. In their struggle against it, they have

indulged in accusations of disbelief and committed numerous treacherous murders against other Muslims. They assume that this is a part of being religious, while it is in fact a kind of religious extremism. In modern times, there have emerged many movements to resist political authoritarianism. Such movements are motivated by religion, but they use methods that exceed the religious teachings, thinking that they have a religious base, on the grounds that these methods enable one to fulfill the religious principal of resisting authoritarianism and disseminating freedom and justice. So, they kill the innocent and damage public properties to retaliate against, and overthrow, dictatorial governments. By doing so, they are actually moving from only being extreme to being real terrorists. This state resulted from dictatorship and also extreme religious interpretations.

Political authoritarianism can possibly produce another kind of extremism: Submissive extremism. It does not imply the use of violence but tends for one to abandon public life, based on perceptions held as religious teachings while, in reality, they are not. Dictatorship may be too powerful to be defeated, and resistance to it may cause disorders that threaten the whole society. Then, some may think that authoritarianism is an inescapable destiny and that it is better than the evils of social dissensions. Eventually, there starts a kind of legitimization of it, prohibition of showing any opposition, and then eventually a call for the compliance, favoring and support of it. This approach may even incline one to withdraw from public life, living a private, isolated life seeking individual salvation through spiritual exercises that are beyond the limits of religious teachings.

It is this reason that probably caused the appearance of some excessive sects. When they despaired of the termination of dictatorship, they rejected public life and indulged in a spiritual life that exceeded the teachings of the religion with such ideas as Immanentism, Pantheism, etc.

By the same token, some political jurists legitimize dictatorship itself by justifying the seizure and preservation of power using military force. In this sense, the Imâm of the Two Sacred Mosques said: "If someone uses power to take over any leadership, he is a legitimate leader. It is the same

as a contract between two parties."[1] If this judgment applies to a leader who fulfills the requirements of leadership, it seems to imply that it is a limitation that is not set in Islam to state that a leader should only come to power by the will and general consent of the nation. About this point, Al-Kawâkibî wrote: "A careful examination of the history of Islam will find that some past dictators and foreign scholars, as well as some current Arab imitators, have fabricated falsehoods allegedly attributed to Allah and His Messenger in order to mislead the Muslim Nation, and to purposefully extinguish the light of knowledge and wisdom."[2]

Some contemporary Muslim groups may have fallen into this negative immoderation because of authoritarianism. Some of them defend any dictatorial behavior of rulers on the grounds of the *Shar'î* justification that this behavior belongs to people of authority, thus legitimizing the obligatory obedience towards them and the prohibition of opposing their policies. Others may withdraw completely from this matter, keep religion away from any judgment about dictatorship, and consider dealing with it as useless. Such types of groups are the product of domineering, frustrating authoritarianism. If freedom and consultation were prevalent, such conceptions would not be existent. Surely they are extremist, but they are still at the third level of extremism which is mentioned above and do not go beyond it to the fourth level.

Ideological Narrow-Mindedness

Authoritarianism may be ideological. It occurs when free thinking is somehow prevented, one single point of view is dictated, and no opportunity is provided to learn about other points of view or even express one's own view. It is a confinement of the way one thinks and a compulsion to adopt one point of view. The most relevant example of this ideological dictatorship is mentioned in the Qur'ân when the story of *Fir'awn* (i.e. Pharaoh) is related.

(1) The Imâm of the Two Sacred Mosques, *Al-Juwaynî*, Al-Ghiyâthî, Qatar, Religious Affairs, 1400 A.H., 317. See also our book: *Approaches to Legacy Readings*, Beirut, Dâr Al-Badâ'il, 2001, p. 83 and following.

(2) 'Abdur-Rahmân Al-Kawâkibî, Nature of Authoritarianism, Algeria, Mophem Publications, 1998, p. 36. Although we deem Imâm Al-Juwaynî to be far above being included in the judgment of Al-Kawâkibî, we actually think that his opinion concerning political dictatorship is one that bears some amount of excessiveness.

{Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh) said: "I show you only that which I see (correct), and I guide you only to the path of right policy!"}

[Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 29]

Ideological authoritarianism has various aspects. For example, teachers use the methodology of plain instruction, in which learners are given huge amounts of information to memorize but he is deprived of any opportunity to reflect on and evaluate the study material. Also, learners are given just one answer for a certain question, while other possible answers are ignored. The chosen opinions and attitudes are presented to learners as the one and only truth and anything else is presented as being absolutely wrong. This is not carried out on the basis of objective scrutiny and probability but on the basis of prejudice and predetermined rejection. In all these practices, minds are not allowed to consider matters freely. They are bound specifically to the given point of view and prevented from going beyond the set limits. This falls under ideological authoritarianism and leads to extremism in different ways.

In fact, ideological authoritarianism can form single-opinion mentalities that firmly hold the opinions taught to them as the best and true ones. Therefore, they will reject any opposing opinions although they do not have the ability to discuss, scrutinize or evaluate them, or the ability to review and correct their own opinions. Rather, they will stick obstinately to their own opinions which were taught to them.

Even with religious rulings, opinions cannot be based on absolute certainty except for a small number of rulings associated to facts which are religiously taken for granted. However, most of the rulings are probabilistic and subject to *Ijtihâd* (religious reasoning and discretion), and thus susceptible to misunderstandings. Furthermore, any given ruling may be sound in one case, but subsequent cases may need to be replaced with another ruling. There is a *Fiqhî* principle explained by Ibnul-Qayyim[1] which states that rulings change according to the change of conditions.

(1) Ibnul-Qayyim, *I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în* (Informing Muftis), Beirut, Dâr Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993, 3/11.

If minds cling to a view inculcated by a dictatorship and refuse anything else, this may lead them to insist on things that are intrinsically wrong or things that had been right originally but the change of conditions rendered them incorrect. In fact, this is a form of absolute extremism in how one perceives religious rules, followed by behavioral extremism if one's actions are based on these perceptions. Extremism includes insisting on rulings of *Ijtihâd* that may have changed due to the change of conditions. In fact, every religious ruling has a *Shar'î* purpose; if a ruling does not serve to achieve its purpose, for one reason or another, sticking to it would be a kind of extremism.

In the past, *Kharijites* refused *At-Tahkîm* (arbitration between 'Alî and Mu'âwiyah), maintaining: "We never leave men to arbitrate about (a matter concerning) Allah's religion." They clung blindly to this perception and rejected any other views that permit arbitration. Arbitration is mentioned in several Qur'anic verses, such as Allah's saying:

{"...Send (for) an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family..."} [An-Nisâ' (Women): 35]

This obstinate, one-sided thinking led them to accuse other Muslims of disbelief and, eventually, to commit violence against society as a whole. This is an indication of the adoption of extremism as a result of ideological authoritarianism.

Similar to this are the principles of some excessive sects, whose followers submit themselves to their Sheikh; he thinks on their behalf, lets them believe in only what he believes in, prohibits them from expressing their opinions about what he says and does, and forbids them to learn about other opinions opposing his own views. This dictatorship results ultimately in many deviations in the religious perceptions adopted by Sheikhs which are embraced by their followers who would hold onto and restrict themselves to them and, thus, become fanatical. Their perceptions may even become so deviant that they believe that religious obligations no longer apply to them because they have reached the level of certainty, which is the utmost goal of any religious obligation[1]. This is nothing but explicit extremism resulting from ideological authoritarianism.

(1) See 'Abdur-Rahmân Badawî, Sects of the Islamists, Beirut, Dâr Al-'Ilm Lil-Malâyîn, 1979, p. 789.

In modern times, there are many *Fiqhî* and ideological schools whose members are taught that the right understanding of religion is only one and this understanding pertains to their perceptions and opinions. They claim that all other perceptions are false and should not be learnt, let alone acted on. They become narrow-minded because of this dictatorship, i.e. by prohibiting them from looking at other opinions. This creates some form of hostility against any opposing school. Nevertheless, this single opinion dictated to them may involve some particulars that are taken as generalizations for all people, such as shortening (men's) clothes and growing one's beard. They may also be taught rulings that were necessary in certain conditions many centuries ago, but currently these conditions no longer exist, such as the concept of the Abode of War(1), the issue of showing disbelievers aversion and treating them harshly, and many other examples.

Finally, ideological authoritarianism creates groups of followers who adopt such dictatorial beliefs, and afterwards proceed to carry out violence. Most of the current acts of violence happening in the name of Islam are probably committed by such groups that have appeared due to authoritarian environments.

To sum up, extremism is the product of dictatorship as it builds narrow-minded mentalities, causing retaliatory actions or leading to wrong religious interpretations. If we recognize such causes of extremism, then any proposed solution needs to address them if it is to be successful.

The Role of Freedom of Thought in Treating Extremism

Given that ideological authoritarianism is a basic factor in creating extremism, which begins with excessive beliefs and ends up with violent behavior (as is concluded by logical scrutiny and from reality), efforts to counteract extremism should first aim at eliminating its cause; namely, ideological authoritarianism. This can only be done by liberating thought from dictatorship. How can this happen? How can this contribute to the elimination of authoritarianism?

(1) An area inhabited by non-Muslims with whom Muslims have no peace treaty and who pose a danger to Islam.

a) Freedom of Thought

In this paper, thought is defined as "the mental methodology used to look for theoretical and practical facts". This definition goes in line with the linguistic meaning of the word. Lexically, thought is the process of thinking; i.e. to reason about different disciplines. This meaning is also used conventionally in the Islamic culture. Al-Jurjânî wrote: "Thought is the act of putting known information into order to come up with products which were previously unknown."(1) This act of ordering is the intellectual activity used to discover facts.

Freedom of thought is used here to mean that the intellectual activity to discover facts is done through the direct mental processing of the subject at hand in a way that the inherent and acquired components of mental abilities interact with the subjective and objective dimensions of the given subject, free from all obstacles which prevent the mental process from moving in the right way or avert it to a target imposed on it by these obstacles. The obstacles may be inner, such as overwhelming whims and desires and the influence of conventions, or external, such as terrorism practiced on the minds by religious or political authorities; using the same approach as *Fir'awn* in his saying:

{"...I show you only that which I see (correct)..."}

[Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 29]

Another example of external obstacles is the diverse seductions practiced by evildoers on people; using the same approach as Satan in his saying:

{"...If You delay me [i.e. keep me alive] until the Day of Resurrection, I will surely seize and mislead his offspring, except for a few..."} [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 62]

The most important aspect of freedom of thought is probably in the field of education. Learners, whether young or adult, should be given the opportunity to ponder on, explore and evaluate information and beliefs taught to them. By comparing the contents of the point under study to

(1) Al-Jurjânî, *At-Ta'rifât* (Definitions), Beirut, Librairie du Liban Publishers, 1985, p. 176.

its converse and criticizing it to identify any strengths and weaknesses, their intellectual activity concerning it will be free of any pressure from the teacher to hold one particular opinion and reject all other opinions. This intellectual processing should be carried out using an open dialogue between learners and teachers, ending up with self-controlled mentalities that can recognize different way of viewing a given fact, depending on the specifications of the point itself, not according to the instruction given by a dictatorial community of educators who teach only what they believe to be right regardless of any specifications of the relevant subjects.

Obviously, freedom of thought inevitably correlates to the freedom to express opinions one holds. Any opinion would be valueless if it was kept to oneself, even if it was formed with an open-mind, considering the details logically, and happens to be correct. Opinions become valuable for the most part when they are expressed, which only takes place within an environment of freedom of expression. Therefore, freedom of expression is part of freedom of thought.

b) Manifestations of Freedom of Thought

Freedom of thought only exists when a number of components are secured. These components are developed through a step-by-step development of the intellect within the general upbringing process that learners receive, so that their minds gradually mature and decide on a frame of thought with certain qualities that can be considered the manifestations of freedom of thought. When these manifestations are developed, it can be said that freedom of thought is readily available.

Probably the first manifestation that is acquired is that various options are open to the mind that wants to reach a certain fact and these options are specified by the given issue itself, not according to a dictated line of thought specified by an instructor in order to come up with a specific judgment. It is this manifestation that the Glorious Qur'ân intends for man when it instructs him to look for the truth about the Creator of this universe. The Qur'ân does not dictate a particular method or judgment to him. Rather, it guides him to process different issues openly and lets him reach his judgment according to any way he chooses. The Qur'ân forbids coercing anyone into believing in Allah. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

{"...So, will you (O Muhammad) then compel people in order that they become believers?"} [Yûnus (Jonah): 99]

The Qur'ân exhorts man to deliberate freely (without any restrictions), as the following verse indicates:

{"Say, "Behold what is in the heavens and the earth." But of no avail will be signs or those who warn to a people who believe not."} [Yûnus (Jonah): 101]

Therefore, the Glorious Qur'ân lets everyone look freely at all possible options and come up with any result he chooses, but one takes the responsibility for the choice one chooses.

Another manifestation is that the intellect proceeds to learn about different opinions other than those adopted by instruction or by free contemplation, even if one ends up refusing these new opinions. In fact, dedicating oneself to a single opinion while there are several opinions is a restriction on one's freedom of thought. Freedom of thought requires that the intellect looks at the wide range of opinions, whether advocating of or opposing them, related to one's personal opinion. This can broaden one's scope of vision and offer ample opportunity for more open and comprehensive intellectual activity.

The Islamic culture, with the guidance of the Noble Qur'ân, is established upon freedom of thought. Muslim thinkers and scholars, in their scientific writings, have always stated other, opposing views when presenting their own views. They even hypothesize contrasting views if none actually exist, using the "if it is said..., we would say..." technique. In fact, this is an excellent example of the freedom of thought present in the Islamic culture.

Yet another manifestation of freedom of thought is that the intellect is introduced to different opinions that are reached after much scrutiny; then extensive comparisons are made between their underlying rationales, ins and outs, practical evidence, etc. Next the opinions are evaluated to decide on what is right and what is wrong, what is acceptable and what is more acceptable. Finally, it is decided which opinions have the strongest evidence and soundest logic.

Comparison and evaluation, of course, provide the intellect with the freedom to review, meditate on and criticize different views without favoring one single view and taking it for granted, which is a restriction on one's freedom of thought. The processes of comparison and evaluation are higher degrees of learning and understanding, and they are integral parts of the freedom of thought.

The most important manifestation of freedom of thought may be that the intellect is capable of performing, and actually carries out, self-criticism. When one holds a set of views, formulated using the abovementioned manifestations, but devotes himself tightly to them, considering them the absolute truth and allowing no possibility to review them, then this is a restriction on one's freedom of thought. Nevertheless, when one has enough flexibility to criticize himself and reconsider his views, he will have more freedom to seek the truth.

Self-criticism does not mean being very obsessed and having doubts about everything. Rather, it means that if there is new information related to any personal idea, view and conception, especially in terms of hypothetical or uncertain matters, freedom requires that they are reviewed in the light of this new information; perhaps there will appear other aspects of the truth that may rectify any mistakes in one's previous conceptions. This meaning may be implied by the golden rule that "my opinion is considered right but it may possibly be wrong, and another person's opinion is considered wrong but it may possibly be right". It is according to this rule that Imâm Ash-Shâfi'î changed many of his *Fiqhî* opinions formulated (by means of *Ijtihâd*) in Iraq when he departed to Egypt and found new conditions that required a revision and change. So many other Imâms did the same that self-criticism was a norm of the traditional Islamic culture. Actually, this may be the most excellent example of freedom of thought.

c) Freedom of Thought is the Cure of Extremism

Now that we know that ideological authoritarianism is one of the most influential causes of extremism, whether in beliefs or practices, then it's opposite - freedom of thought with its aforementioned manifestations - will definitely be among the most important tools to prevent extremism appear-

ing, or eliminate it if it actually exists. This cure is probably the most effective one among other possible cures, since it addresses the basic origins and roots of extremism (namely, the individual's way of thinking), while other cures act for the most part to counteract external factors that strengthen and cater for extremism. How can freedom of thought be a cure for extremism?

I. Showing the Correct Views

As explained previously, extremism in the broad sense is the state of going beyond the proper limits set by religion and obstinately sticking to such excessive notions as the one and only truth. When an individual looking for the truth about a certain matter is subject to dictatorship, he will be liable to come up with wrong findings. This is because the dictator will likely want him to conclude findings not complying with the unbiased facts of the matter at hand, but complying with the personal reasons of the dictator himself; e.g. material interest, fanatically following a certain personal point of view, advocacy of a belief, etc. Thus, the one subject to dictatorship will reach an opinion that is most likely to be wrong and exceed the limits set by the religion as a result of such subjective instruction. Finally, extremism originates when these opinions are blindly adopted and considered as the only truth, which is the most that is expected to happen in these cases.

This was the case when *Fir'awn* instructed his people to approve his false ideas in order to preserve his prestige and prevent them from pondering on the preaching of the believer[1], otherwise they might reach,

(1) This man was mentioned in the following verse:

> *{"And a believing man from the family of Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh) who concealed his faith said: "Would you kill a man (merely) because he says: 'My Lord is Allah', while he has come to you with clear proofs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, then upon him will be (the consequence of) his lie; but if he is truthful, then there will strike you some of what he promises you (i.e. calamity). Indeed, Allah guides not one who is a transgressor and a liar." "O my people! Yours is the sovereignty today, being dominant in the land. But who will protect us from the punishment of Allah if it comes to us?" Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh) said: "I show you only that which I see (correct), and I guide you only to the path of right policy."}*
>
> [Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 28, 29]

through free contemplation, a result that differed from what *Fir'awn* wanted and so threaten his monarchy and prestige; i.e. to believe in Mûsâ (Moses) as a Prophet. In fact, this is the case with anyone who prohibits his followers from listening to any views other than his. He does this in order to have more control over them and thus enjoy a higher social position and material privileges.

On the other hand, when one has an opportunity to make free intellectual activity, addressing multiple considerations and opinions, comparing and evaluating them, the resulting opinions he reaches will be as close to the truth as possible. Comparing different opinions, arguments and proofs can test and clarify them in order to distinguish the sound opinions from the wrong ones. By this free activity, the thought will ultimately adopt the most reasonable opinions and reject the strange or unreasonable ones.

For this reason, in its basic teachings, Islam focuses on liberating the intellects from ideological authoritarianism practiced by the socially privileged class in the name of social traditions, or by clerics and the religious elite in the name of religion. As a result of authoritarianism, people resolutely hold the opinions they are familiar with and reject everything else. This was the case with those who opposed the Islamic call from its very beginning and were so excessive in their reluctance that they used violence. The Glorious Qur'ân exhorts people to liberate their minds from the evil of ideological authoritarianism in order to be able to think freely and so keep away from restrictive extremism. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"...Its affluents said: "We found our fathers upon (i.e. following) a religion and we are, in their footsteps, following (them)." He (their warner) said: "Even if I brought you better guidance than that upon which you found your fathers?" They said: "Indeed, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent."}*
>
> [Az-Zukhruf (Decoration): 23, 24]

He also says:

> *{"They have taken their scholars and monks as lords apart from Allah..."}* [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 31]

In these verses, and many others, the Qur'ān urges us to liberate our thoughts from the influence of authoritarians in order to reach the truth which is indicated by using free thought and is necessary to be moderate.

This was the methodology adopted by the early, great Muslim scholars. In their writings, they always elaborated on all available opinions regarding an issue, then they studied them carefully, and finally deduced and adopted the soundest ones. By scrutiny, we can find that the more free, broad and critical thinking the scholars of Islamic sciences had, the more accurate their opinions and judgments were (which was most often the case with Muslim scholars); and that the more narrow-minded they were in studying different opinions and views, the closer they were to extremism.

II. Tolerating Other Opinions

Ideological dictatorship results in utter rejection of other opinions, on the basis that the complete truth is represented by the opinion of the dictator. This utter rejection often ends up, in its extreme degree, with accusations of disbelief being laid against those who adopt different opinions, not just accusations of deviation and going astray. In fact, freedom of thought is one of the important tools to tolerate other opinions, and thus it is an effective way to prevent extremism. Tolerating other opinions does not mean adopting these opinions and giving up one's own beliefs. Rather, several meanings are implied in the concept of toleration.

An implication of this concept is "psychological tolerance": One should not consider those who adopt other opinions as enemies, avoid them or exclude them from his human sphere, let alone the scientific sphere. Rather, they should be seen as mere seekers of the truth, whether they have reached it or not, and so they deserve to be accepted and their opinions be discussed with them rationally, no matter what the result of this discussion will be.

Another implication of tolerating others is to recognize their right to exist, whether they are tolerated psychologically or not. It should be believed that those who have different opinions have the right to exist, express themselves and advocate their opinions without restrictions, just as one has the same right. Whether being right or wrong is not the criterion for

the right to exist. Even if there are certain special cases in which the right to exist is denied to one opinion, for one reason or another, the general principle is always to tolerate the other and recognize his right to exist and express himself.

Tolerating others may involve the willingness to benefit from their opinions (however different they are) if they happen to prove useful. One may even proceed to study these opinions objectively and try to derive from them reasonable aspects that deserves to be accepted, although they are originally rejected. These efforts will enable you to look at others in a more open and tolerating way, which can never be realized if they are thought of as having no benefit or reasonability.

The Glorious Qur'ân gives an excellent example on how to deal with others. Allah, Exalted be He, guides the Prophet (PBUH) and all Muslims to tolerate those who differ with them concerning religion. He, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"Say (O Muhammad): "Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?" Say: "Allah. And indeed, (either) we or you are upon guidance (i.e. rightly guided) or in plain error." Say (O Muhammad): "You will not be asked about what we committed of crimes, nor shall we be asked about what you do."}*
>
> [Saba' (Sheba): 24, 25]

In this Divine Guidance, Allah demonstrates the tolerant attitude one should have towards others who hold a different view. This is represented by the generalization of the possibility of either of the two parties being guided or in error, while attributing crimes to the self but mere actions to the other party - although in reality the opposite is the situation in both cases, but this is done to make the others at ease (and not feel as though they are being verbally attacked). The verse also emphasizes the admission of the other's right to exist and have a personal opinion. This is inferred from this verse, in which the opinion of the other is taken seriously and discussed leniently and openly. Furthermore, the verse suggests that we should be willing to benefit from the other's opinions if they turn out to be

partly correct. This is implied in the generalization of the possibility of the other being guided, too; this means that the opinion of the other may be partly right and so it could be acceptable. Therefore, the Islamic approach directs us to tolerate the other's opinion.[1]

Toleration of the other, which is a major way to protect against extremism, can only be achieved by freedom of thought. Its first enemy is authoritarianism: When the intellect is driven to hold the opinions predetermined by the dictators, this will make one convinced that the truth is confined to one's personal beliefs and that any other opinions are null and void. Consequently, one will feel a deep aversion to others, considering that their false opinions do not have the right to exist, not to mention the right to be examined, evaluated and benefited from.

On the other hand, when the mind freely addresses all possible aspects of the truth and meditates on all opinions, whether one holds these opinions or not, either agreeing or disagreeing with them, this will create inside oneself a space broad enough to encompass the wide range of opinions, even if they contradict with each other. This tolerant attitude implies one acknowledges that all opinions have the right to exist and are valuable, otherwise they would not have been examined. By comparing, testing and evaluating, it may appear that these conflicting opinions are partly reasonable and so should be considered. This objective and open-minded approach can prevent extremism, whose underlying perceptions are to refuse others, exclude them and deny their right to exist.

When we look at the numerous extremist groups in the present day Muslim society and compare them with other moderate groups, we will find clear evidence for the fact that freedom of thought is the main generator of moderation and that ideological dictatorship is the main generator of extremism. This is also true for the early groups and sects in the history of Islamic culture. The more ideological authoritarianism is practiced, the more extremist views are produced; and, by contrast, the more freedom of thought is applied, the more moderate views are produced.

(1) For more information, see Ar-Râzî, *"At-Tafsîr Al-Kabîr"* (the Great Interpretation), Beirut, Dâr Al-Fikr, 1925, 13/258.

Some contemporary Muslim groups belong to very traditional cultural schools which focus on teaching one single doctrine in the Islamic sciences, which is presented to learners through one-way, not interactive, instruction. Other doctrines in the Islamic sciences are hardly introduced to learners. As for natural sciences and humanities, they are completely banned for learners since they are thought to cause mental confusion and affect their sound beliefs. As a result of this kind of ideological authoritarianism, such schools produce groups who are more or less extreme.

At the same time, there are other Muslim groups who are educated in Islamic and academic institutions and study Islamic curricula which are not restricted to one particular doctrine. They address different doctrines, using the comparative methodology to examine, compare and evaluate all possible opinions. In these educational institutions, learners also study different traditional and modern sciences, doctrines and philosophies, discussing and evaluating them. In general, they are educated within an environment of freedom of thought, in which they are open to all possibilities when looking for the truth, so they graduate with a moderate and tolerant approach.

It is not haphazard that most of those described as extremists in the current Islamic sphere are from the above-mentioned traditional groups, along with those who graduated from educational institutions specialized merely in natural sciences, and then were improperly introduced to *Shar'ī* sciences through public, nonacademic lessons of *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings), so they only learnt one-sided opinions and doctrines. Therefore, they were subject to a form of ideological dictatorship, so consequently becoming extreme. Many of the notorious names associated with extremism belong to this category.

On the other hand, there are graduates of reputable Islamic academic institutions whose curricula are based on a comparison and evaluation of general sciences and disciplines. Likewise, there are graduates of modern educational institutions whose curricula are based on discussion and openness to different opinions, and afterwards they acquire good *Shar'ī* knowledge on a systematic and comparative basis. Such kinds of

personalities rarely fall into extremism, and it is them who adopt and practice moderation. Surely, the first type of individual is the product of ideological authoritarianism, while the second one is the product of freedom of thought.

Conclusion

In the end, it can be concluded that authoritarianism is a wide gateway to extremism. The most threatening type of authoritarianism is the ideological one. It requires the mind to adopt a way of thinking that takes the one-sided views which are predetermined by a dictator for a certain purpose, considering them the one and only truth.

This dictatorship-based extremism can only be eliminated by liberating the intellect's attempts to look for the truth from the upper hand of the dictators. He should be educated to address all possible aspects of the truth freely, directed only by the objective considerations of the matter under consideration. This way, one will be able to tolerate others, both psychologically and cognitively, recognize their right to exist, and use dialogue in order to reach and benefit from the truth. In fact, this is the clearest image of moderation, rather than rejection and negation of the existence of others as a result of authoritarian control, which is the clearest image of extremism.



Political Dimension of Violence



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Recent terrorism, in many of its aspects, has become media-related. Therefore, such a fact should be taken into account, as it means that those working in the media field, regardless of their positions, are exploited by some parties that run their battles and exercise their terrorism through the media, which is currently regarded as the most dangerous field.

When a researcher talks about the political dimension of a certain phenomenon, he may seem as if he is referring to an ordinary, secondary or maybe even a basic dimension of a phenomenon that has many other dimensions. This applies to the phenomenon of violence if the researcher means forms of violence other than the one meant nowadays by official and public authorities all over the world. Such forms may include violence at schools, violence of criminals and teenagers who live in marginalized areas, violence of spouses against each other, or even violence of housewives against their female servants, as happens in some countries.

The phenomenon of violence, according to its current, widespread meaning, is unquestionably a political problem. That is, when other dimensions take part in it, they are of less importance than the political one. This applies to the intellectual, religious, economical and social dimensions. However, these dimensions should not be underestimated, especially when the purpose is to find effective methods to handle the negative aspects of this phenomenon.

The economical, social and even intellectual dimensions are often the result of the political movement. That is because policies are the greatest stimulator of the social and economical situation which brings about violence. Moreover, the emergence, development and spread of ideas are often the objective results of issues that are somewhat related to policies and their effects on the world.

In the beginning, we would like to indicate that the violence we mean here is the one that has a political base, regardless of the identity of this base and the correctness of its vision and direction, or whether it is the result of individual initiatives or organized groups that receive internal or external support.

If we wish to classify forms of violence that concern us, we will be able to form different types of classifications, each according to different bases. However, we will refer to only one classification that enables us to find the causes, motives and goals, as well as the views of the future. In this connection, if we examine the forms of violence that concern us as well as the general public, especially in the Arab and Islamic world, we will find two basic kinds from which several branches are formed. These two basic kinds are: Internal and External Violence.

Internal Violence

- Violence against occupation forces, from which branches the violence against those categorized as collaborators.
- Violence against the political authority or the state (or regime, as it is currently known).

External Violence

- Violence against an enemy in its homeland, from which branches the violence against military or civil targets.
- Violence against the occupation forces in other than the occupied land or an enemy that practices any form of aggression against a party, according to the latter's viewpoint, and which, in turn, makes it resort to violence.
- Violence against an enemy or its representatives in Muslim countries.

Under the Cover of Being Part of an Ideology

Many believe that Islamic fundamentalism has brought about today's widespread violence in many areas, more than any policy or objective conditions in the world. However, the real findings and outcomes of both the past and present deny and refute such views, since no ideology results in violence unless certain objective circumstances are present. This, of course, applies to the leftist as well as religious views, such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, etc. In a nutshell, ideology does not make the (objective) circumstances that lead to violence, but it is exploited and made use of by those practicing violence in order to deepen the state of rejection and re-

bellion so they can justify their acts of violence. As for the radical explanation that justifies violence, stating it is part of any ideology, it is present all the time. This is supported by the fact that there is no religion or thought but it justifies violence in some situations, and this violence can actually appear if the (objective) certain circumstances exist.

Moreover, the radical *Fatwâs* (legal opinions), so to speak, existed and still exist, but without the presence of certain (objective) circumstances – which are often political or the product of policies – which can turn them into reality, they will be kept inside drawers or books. Rather, some can adopt and promote such *Fatwâs* without being able to turn them into reality, due to certain objective circumstances not being present.

Legality and Illegality of Violence

The question of ideology takes us to the issue of when violence is legal and when it is illegal. Initially, we would like to denote that legality is not very different from the issue of *Fatwâs* and thoughts. To illustrate, in some cases violence could be legal but this may not result in actually triggering off any violence. In other cases, violence could explode even though it is illegal.

Our aim behind this is not to consider the legality or illegality of any action. However, this cannot prevent us from admitting that in many cases some forms of violence – legally known as *Jihâd* or commonly known as resistance – are legal. Hence, it is worthless to say that non-violence is an Islamic methodology in a violent world that sells noble slogans of justice and human rights. Certainly, there is no value of some people's talk of non-violence, other than that of internal relations, unless they are able to deny the events related to *Jihâd* against disbelievers during the Prophet's life (PBUH), along with the huge number of texts concerning *Jihâd* and the repulsion of aggression, as mentioned in Allah's Words:

> ***{"Permission to fight [against disbelievers] is given to those who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is Able to give them [believers] victory. Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is Allah..."}*** [Al-Hajj (Pilgrimage): 39, 40]

Rather, some forms of violence have been legalized even in internal relations among Muslims. Has not Allah given permission to fight the aggressive party that wrongs another party and refuses to agree on a settlement between them?

Moreover, arguments and debates among Muslims regarding violence in internal relations between the people and authorities have never reached any consensus. That is, the issue of revolting against the oppressor, disbeliever or defiantly disobedient ruler – i.e. according to the accepted classification – is still controversial since each party has strong proofs supporting its view. Furthermore, it is sufficient for those who deem the issue of violence in internal relations as permissible to refer to the incident of Al-Husayn (may Allah be pleased with him) and the incident in which the two Imâms – Abû Hanîfah and Mâlik – supported the revolt of Muhammad (nicknamed as "the Pure Soul") and his brother, Ibrâhîm Ibnul-Hasan, against Abû Ja`far Al-Mansûr, not to mention other texts taken from the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* (Prophetic tradition), which are not the subject of our discussion here. Therefore, these proofs are sufficient for these scholars to justify their rulings.

The reason behind the tendency of the Islamic movements, in the recent decades, to refuse the principle of resorting to armed revolt against ruling regimes is based on the *Shar`î* rule relied on by former jurists. This rule states: "Averting evils and harms takes precedence over bringing about benefits and interests." In other words, if denying evil and oppression results in more evil and oppression, then abstaining from denying is more preferable as it is the original situation. The outcome, therefore, is that this situation is the result of the status quo, not of the texts related to prohibition and lawfulness. Even if it is said that some Muslim groups that practiced acts of violence have reconsidered their thoughts and found that violence is impermissible, other groups, however, still adhere to the other opinion that legalizes violence. This means that the first stance is preferable, but this does not omit the possibility of some situations rising to the surface which drive any group to adopt the other opinion.

We have mentioned the above in an attempt to move this issue away from the circle of being permissible or impermissible to the view of considering it in the light of natural defense. The latter perspective takes into account the best interests of the people and country, but adhering to the first perspective will lead everyone to be rebellious and revolt against the law while considering any actions he undertakes as an act of *Jihâd* in the Cause of Allah.

It is noteworthy that when reviewing the Prophet's (PBUH) biography in the light of Qur'anic texts, one finds that they emphasize that *Jihâd* is not considered according to its permissibility or impermissibility, but according to the best interests of Islam and Muslims as well as the balance of powers. In fact, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) practiced all sorts of political tactics in his *Jihâd* against the disbelievers. He (PBUH) fought, concluded truces, made reconciliations and formed alliances. He, also, cancelled covenants when their conditions had been violated. Accordingly, *Jihâd* was not practiced blindly without regarding the interests or harm involved or the time and place. Rather, it was a policy based on a great and accurate estimation of the general situation at all levels.

The Relation between the Attitude of the Public and the Emergence and Continuation of Violence

When addressing violence from a political perspective as a phenomenon deserving study and follow-up, we find that the eruption and continuation of violence are the result of (objective) certain circumstances. Here, the most important dimension may be the attitude of the public, if it seeks and supports violence. This is due to the fact that no rebellion or violence can break out and continue without an appropriate atmosphere. In case some kinds of marginal violence break out, their continuation is impossible in the absence of an environment that nurtures it or a lack of external support. The absence of external support, however, will not prevent violence if it is directed against the state.

When witnessing and reviewing violence in the Arab and Islamic regions, particularly from the aspect of causes and motives, we have to go back to the above-mentioned classifications. We shall begin with violence practiced against occupation forces.

Violence Practiced against Occupation Forces

Undoubtedly, the occupation of a country by another country is a sufficient cause for the appearance of resistance or violence, regardless whether such violence receives external support or not and whether the continuation of such resistance and the achievement of its goals require external reinforcement from certain states, groups or nations.

Moreover, the inevitability of such kind of violence grows more and more due to the support it receives from all international, religious and human laws that view it as a form of legalized resistance deserving support. Generally, the brutal practices of occupation and its forces are often sufficient to escalate resistance. Even just the presence of the occupation forces is enough to arouse resistance on the part of the occupied nation.

In fact, the Palestinian crisis represents a historical proof and witness to the brutal practices of occupation as well as the legality of resistance. However, it is also a proof of the confusion of international standards that have helped the occupying party to obtain international legality for its existence and crimes. Generally speaking, examples of resisting occupation in the Arab and Islamic world were and still are very many. Among them are the Afghan and Iraqi occupation by U.S. forces. This is in addition to the earlier occupation of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union. Also, numerous resistance movements around the world were due to occupation, such as the American Independence War, the European resistance movements against the Nazi occupation, the Vietnamese resistance, the Algerian resistance and many other examples of resistance against occupation in the Arab and Islamic world.

Many mistakes and wrongdoings may be committed in the name of war against occupation. Moreover, there may be controversy over what is permissible and what is not, such as the matter of targeting those collaborating with the occupied forces; a matter in which the right is confused with wrong due to the differences of legal opinions concerning such collaboration and its limits.

Violence against the State or Political Authority

There are many political factors that can trigger such kind of violence regardless of its political usefulness or its ability to achieve the common interests of the Islamic nation. In this connection, Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim, in his book *"I'lâm Al-Muwaqq'în"* (i.e., Informing Muftis) maintains that the interest of the public should be considered a basic rule when judging political issues as a whole, stating that wherever the interest of the Muslim exits, Allah's Law *(Sharî'ah)* supports it. It should be taken into account that the process of evaluating the interest of the public is certainly different among scholars as well as politicians.

In recent decades, there have been a set of policy-related factors that led to many acts of violence in the Arab and Islamic region, including:

- First, an important feature appeared only in the last two centuries. Here, I mean the Arab and Islamic world's adoption of the modern pattern of the Western states which is related to compulsory secularization as well as the socioeconomic movement of society.

  In fact, Islam did not become a subsidiary reference for the state, after being the sole reference, until recently, though corruption and oppression practiced by some rulers are not something new. Rather, the Islamic reference was subsidiary during most of the Islamic eras without actually excluding it totally. On the contrary, this exclusion took place in the last two centuries, when Eastern and Western secularism were used in place of the Islamic reference. This resulted in a defect in the social and political states of the region, causing some movements and trends to rise, calling for the restoration of the Islamic reference. In the light of this, some terms have appeared, such as "The Islamic State," "The Implementation of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*," "Accusing Rulers of Disbelief" and "The Ignorance of Societies," etc. All such terms arose due to the presence of a detrimental situation that needs to be corrected, regardless of the method of correction.

  It is noteworthy that the Muslim elites and even the Muslim general public have realized that setting religion aside from the life of the Muslims is, from one aspect, a sign of being defeated by the West and a sign of submission to their dictates concerning Islam, which repre-

sents the source of the Muslim nation's power, awareness and unity. Moreover, there were and still are widespread reproaches maintaining that: Any regime that tends to apply religion will be liable to different forms of punishment.

- Because of this major political issue, political and social references have been replaced in order to root such an issue in the life of the Muslims. This replacement, of course, influences the problem of 'Violence' against the State or Political Authority, despite having also affected the treatment of violence and extremism.

  The Islamic elite represented by religious scholars was replaced with the modern secular selection of party members, politicians and well-educated persons. As a result, when the Muslim nation began to return to the religion, the reference of trusted Muslim scholars had declined. Consequently, religion had become liable to be interpreted and taught by people who do not have even the minimum level of knowledge necessary to effectively play their role. Furthermore, various so-called references, some of them being the youth, sprung out talking in the name of religion, particularly after setting *Fiqhî* schools aside and spreading the statement: "The Qur'ân and *Sunnah* are the sources of understanding and legislation from which rules can be deduced directly by anyone."

- There is the dimension concerning the conduct of the modern Arab and Islamic state. On the one hand, this modern state adopted a foreign reference for its political dealings. It was an Eastern reference during the cold war and a Western one during other times in the past as well as the present. Initially, this dimension made some people suspect the modern state's loyalty to the nation's interests, identity and religion. On the other hand, this modern framework drove the state to be authoritarian. This explains the state's practice of violence on many occasions. This exercise turned governments into suppressors, trying to safeguard their gains which were threatened by voices of those who – beside being the forefront of war against suppression and corruption – hold the *Shar'î* view concerning the idea of the Islamic state and the application of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* among the people, who, on their part, adhere to their religion with no hesitation.

> Therefore, governing bodies in most Arab and Islamic countries have decisively put Islamic movements, or any other movement adopting Islam as a methodology, under the jurisdiction of security authorities, even if their activities are peaceful and reformative.

Governments have already decided their attitude towards Islamic movements and all those calling for the implementation of the Islamic *Sharī'ah* or restoration of the Islamic model, regardless of their methodology, be it violent or peaceful. The case has been referred to security authorities, which, in fact, have caused terrible disasters in many Arab and Islamic countries. For example, violence in some countries came to an end by reviewing the situation, despite the fact that this does not mean that the case was settled in a way that makes its recurrence impossible. That is because those who relied on the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* to justify violence were the same who denied it using the same reference; the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. It will not be surprising if other people are persuaded by the same old justifications when the present, peaceful atmosphere changes to support violence.

Violence of State and Prisons

It is clear that the various forms of state violence were and still are effective elements in triggering counter-violence in the Arab world. Counter-violence is of so many different forms, including suppression, imprisonment and repressing liberties at all levels.

In the prisons, the first basic units and groups of violence and accusations of disbelief were developed. In early 1980s, many events occurred which made the Islamic group change from being based on *Da'wah* (i.e., calling to Islam and adhering to its teachings) to being an armed group, particularly after violence and torture in prisons began to take hideous forms. Moreover, when freedom was suppressed and the right of *Da'wah* was prevented, in addition to the prisons and torture practiced inside them, the Muslim youth came to hold the belief that those practicing such acts of violence could not be Muslims, and, hence, there would be no harm in fighting and killing them. Many observers maintained that the mentality of revenge prevailed during the confrontations between the security authorities and Islamic groups.

Further, when participation in the political field in the Arab and Islamic world was opened, many of those who were previously accused of practicing violence participated in politics. Some of them ran municipal and parliamentary elections, but the situation was turned upside down, which drove some of them to resort to the mountains in order to fight the state. When the reactions of the state and its militias against these groups became more violent, their counter-reactions were hysterical, to the extent that they started to kill the families of policemen and state personnel. Hence, the bloodbaths of revenge and counter-revenge continued severely in a vicious circle.

On the other side, we can give examples of the positive dialogue that was conducted with some of those who had engaged in actions of violence. Dialogue was held between them and religious scholars. As a result, these individuals recanted their actions and views, although the general political atmosphere was still not good. Nevertheless, they had been convinced that internal violence does not help when confronting the real enemy. However, this conviction does not mean that they are in fact convinced that the ruler is the one in charge and, thus, he has the right to be obeyed. That is because many politicians who do not adopt violence, do not hold this conviction. To illustrate more, these politicians are members of their parliaments in their countries because it is the only available, and may be the best, way to have any influence under the current objective circumstances.

In fact, confiscating liberties and applying the policy of violence against society and even against the Islamic groups or those who call to restore the Islamic pattern in the life of the state and society represent a good recipe for triggering violence instead of creating an atmosphere of freedom and generating positive enterprises that absorb the energy of the young generations. It is noteworthy that the efforts of moderate Islamic groups have often helped in preventing violence, despite many Arab countries having factors that could trigger off violence.

- The above refers us to all the policies and internal affairs that support violence, without taking into consideration any religious *Fatwâs* (i.e., legal opinions). To illustrate more, there are many factors that contribute to support violence or, at least, make it acceptable by society.

Such factors include suppression and corruption, in all their political, economical, administrative and social forms along with the aforementioned dimension of annexing the reference of Islam for the state and society – despite being the state's official religion – in addition to the war launched against the religious movement and the encouragement of hostile practices against religion, at various levels. All these factors have all contributed to create an environment that causes violence or at least one in which violence is accepted by the public.

Generally, succeeding in eliminating violence resulting from the above-mentioned circumstances cannot be achieved without eliminating the public support for it. Due to this, violence may turn into being futile and random, causing harm to the society and never bringing about any positive change in the political field. On the other hand, it may even contribute to reinforce the grip of the security forces under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

It may be suitable here to say that the control of violence in some countries has not been due to the security power, despite its importance; rather, it has resulted from public despair of its course and outcome. Thus, people have renounced violence, particularly after the harm it caused to their interests in addition to its inability to make any positive change. Here, it should be made clear that the continuation of such violence, in its limited but dangerous way, is possible. However, the form of violence that threatens the state no longer exists after the public support for it ended when the people began to consider it as futile or as a factor that causes harm to the interests of the Muslims. Undoubtedly, this atmosphere played an important role in urging the leaders of Islamic groups to reconsider and review their opinions and renounce violence.

- Certainly, political suppression creates the best atmosphere to spark off violence, particularly when it coincides with oppression and economical decline as a result of corruption. By political suppression, we mean the lack of space for political movements, the freedom of expression and programs via political parties, parliament, press and civil society institutions in a way that helps release the energy of political elites, reinforces

public enterprises, and enables the public to express their opinions and stances. Political suppression makes way for more and more repression, which eventually triggers various forms of violence.

- The ruling regimes, in many Arab countries, deal with the public unrest by devising some kind of democracy, even if it is a false one, which enables them to contain the anger of the public temporarily. However, public violence may be triggered when there is corruption, suppression, annexation of religion and aggression against religious issues, along with a considerable amount of subjection to the West and the nation's enemies.

Also there are some more causes, which may be related to external violence. These include:

- The policy of cession and surrender regarding the Palestinian issue which is adopted by some Arab regimes, not to mention the interference of the West to deepen such a policy.
- The countries' weakness and their vulnerability when facing external pressure, which result in a loss of dominance, violation of sovereignty and defiance of the people, not only by those who call for violence, but also by those who call for complete submission to the external agenda, such as non-governmental organizations and some figures who have special relations with the West.
- Aggression against the Muslim nation which state leaders do not counteract with strong enough action to help abreact built up, public anger.

There is no doubt that the Arabs' and Muslims' awareness of their reality and rights is now growing, day after day. In the light of the revolution of media, information and communication as well as the expansion of education circles, regimes are no longer able to deceive their people. That is because the government's political, economical and social behavior and practices are subjected to daily observation and criticism. Not only are such an observation and criticism relayed in forums, press and mass media, but they also are related in homes and bedrooms. As a result, every human being is now able to talk about policies and economics. Even the political prisoners have become able to communicate with people, as well as satellite channels, outside prisons using mobile phones.

All the above-mentioned causes constitute a broad groundwork to widen the circle of opposition to corruption and suppression. In case governments reply to such an opposition by practicing more suppression, the emergence of some people, who believe in violence as a way to change the current state, remains potential. This would be the case whether such violence is a reaction to the violent practices of regimes or their submission to the West, which people deem responsible for nourishing the deterioration of their affairs.

It may be said that the increasing awareness still indicates the prevalence of the culture of adopting democracy and discarding violence, even if the latter is a reaction to clear injustices. This is true to some extent, but this situation may change later in case such political procrastination continues, and the masses come to know that the fake democracy has not provided them with anything to help them get closer to their identity and religion, nor provided them with the means to fight corruption and suppression, and boost effective political participation.

Political Dimensions of External Violence

It would be useful to say that relating violence to external factors – whether it is practiced in the enemy's homeland, regardless of the goals, or in other lands including the Arab and Muslim states – is a very essential matter, even if the latter kind of violence involves a confusing relationship with the ruling regimes. This is because those committing acts of violence actually target the enemies.

This kind of violence has a significant basis due to the inheritance of the great injustice and oppression practiced by the West against Muslims. Awareness of the reality of this inheritance has begun to increase as a result of the expansion of education and the spread of political parties and Islamic movements along with the media revolution with all its well-known, modern features.

Noticeably, the Arab elites as well as the masses, in this stage, no longer restrict their criticism to the ruling regimes. Namely, they have extended their critical stances to reach the Western imperialistic powers which provide

protection and shelter for these corrupt regimes. To illustrate, these Western powers threaten these regimes in order to maintain corruption and be opposed to the awareness, identity and interests of their masses. At the same time, these powers also pressurize these regimes to secure Western interests.

That is how the Arab and Muslim citizens view the hideous imperialistic relationship between the behavior of their regimes and the imposition of Western authority. This relationship is based on subordination and protection of Western interests by keeping Arab states as weak and powerless as possible before the Hebrew state (Israel). Moreover, the West wants the Arab states to have no role at all. It also wants to keep them as a market for its products and a source of raw materials. This situation, inevitably, leads to conflict between regimes and their masses as a result of the natural refusal to such an unjust relationship.

Accordingly, when the relationship between the Arab regimes and their Western supporter takes the previously indicated form, there will be some kind of conflict with the nation's solid identity which is the only power able to unify the nation and make it an entity capable of rejecting, resistance and unity. Hence, the calls to unify the whole nation have become the main aim, regardless of the stance of the individual people. This international interference clashes with the nation's awareness, particularly when it provides protection for regimes that practice suppression and corruption, and do not consider the interests of their nation and people.

The West divided Arab and Muslim countries with the aim to entrap the nation in weakness and subordination as well as to prevent it from becoming advanced again. Additionally, the West fights any attempts of our nation to realize a state of unity and cooperation, or possess any power that is able to confront its enemy.

This is not a lecture on the nature of the relationship between the imperialistic West and the Muslim nation since the Sykes-Picot Treaty, or before that, till the present time. Rather, it is an attempt to say that we are facing an unfortunate situation which the Arabs have become more aware of during the time following the cold war; after the clearance of the blinding cloud and the removal of the statement "confronting Anti-Islamic Communism."

The Decline of the Amenable Ties between Islamic Powers and the USA

There are different important features of this stage which have contributed to creating a hostile wave against USA in particular and the West in general, as well as providing an environment suitable for triggering off violence. Among such features is the decline in the amenable ties between the USA and what is called the "Islamic Phenomenon" which is a result of the Islamic movements, powers and parties which call to restore the Islamic ideology and authority to the life of the state and society.

There is no doubt that the Islamic movements have emerged as a reaction to the imperialistic attack, the strike against the Caliphate state, and the practice of side-lining the Islamic ideology when managing the affairs of the state and society. Such movements have also appeared as an attempt to restore the Islamic ideology and authority, regardless of the means adopted to achieve this goal.

Although adopting the slogan of the religion and the state is understood to be a tendency to assume authority, no one on the Islamic side has rejected that the political authorities are the ones who should proceed to achieve this intended goal. Unfortunately, this situation has not been reached due to either the ruling regimes and their beliefs or the powerful external pressures that refuse the idea of restoring the Islamic *Sharī'ah* due to the unity and power that it would give to the country.

Accordingly, if anyone tries to revive the rule of the *Sharī'ah*, the Western power will render such attempts impossible. The states that have resulted from the division of the Islamic nation by the imperialistic powers and Sykes-Picot agreement are too weak to defy the external domination of the West, its manipulation of their internal affairs and intervention in both their internal affairs and foreign relations. Keeping in mind that these states have tried to do so and have come up with different results, ranging between success and failure, their attempts are liable to happen again under other global conditions or due to the effect of the popular internal uprising. In such cases, these states will regain some of their power and unity if they manage to avoid internal division.

This situation continued for a long time, during which Islam was sidelined in the life of the society. Under this situation, the new emerging Western empire decided that Islam was a weapon that should be used in its war against the Communist expansion in this sensitive part of the world. Therefore, it encouraged the utilization of Islam by the West-patronizing regimes, which were described by the left-wing powers as "the disloyal regimes".

On the other hand, those who worked in favor of Islam were fully aware that the situation only meant that some regimes were aligned with the West against the Communist expansion, but it did not mean they were in favor of the USA. However, such awareness did not prevent the Muslim societies, movements, scholars and independent thinkers from cooperating with anti-Communist regimes, especially due to their sufferings and attacks from the progressive regimes and the need of some of them for a resort or exile. This was the case, taking into account that the other party, the nationalists and the leftists, had completely closed the doors on any form of cooperation with Islamic powers. Moreover, this party did not notice the common interests it shared with such Islamic powers regarding the issues of independence, liberty, unity and resistance to both Zionist and Western domination.

Generally, this was the pattern of thinking adopted by the Islamic powers, so that no one could question its legality, regardless of its validity from the political perspective. That is, Communism was seen as an ideological threat, while those advocating Islam were striving to restore the Islamic *Sharī'ah* in the life of people. Here, we should point out that those who worked in favor of Islam were not in agreement with the US policies. On the contrary, they were constantly in opposition to the Western civilization and the imperialistic spirit represented by the practices of the USA and the West as well as their stances against the Palestinian case and the support they gave to the Zionist enemy. Notwithstanding all this, the distant participation of the Islamic powers in the battle against Communism and Socialism was not affected.

During 1950s and 1960s, Communism and Socialism maintained their massive expansion. However, the Israeli aggression against Egypt in 1967 represented a strong blow against this expansion, which started to decline gradually during the 1970s as a result of the changes in Egypt. In this regard, the Palestinian resistance prevented anyone noticing this decline until these two movements totally declined during the 1980s.

In the late 1980s, the Islamic uprising was the unrestrained power that spread over the area. Those advocating Islam advanced in many countries and gradually assumed authority. In Sudan, an Islamic regime was declared after the coup d'état by the Salvation Front in 1989, in addition to the Salvation Front winning in the Algerian elections. In Palestine, the *Intifada* broke out and the Islamic resistance led by Hamas took action in the field of *Jihâd* against Israel, which represented the malicious arm of the US interests in the area.

After the Afghan war, followed by the Gulf war, had come to an end, the US administration became certain that the Islamic phenomenon had not only realized its goals as regards the confrontation with Communism, but it had also turned into the main opponent of the US policies and interests in the area. Accordingly, they found themselves obliged to reconsider their policy of dealing with it.

At that stage, it became clear that the US had decided to limit the influence of the Islamic phenomenon by planting a large number of informants under the disguise as journalists, experts and writers to explore its strong and weak points in order to carry out discussions regarding the best ways of how to deal with it. In this regard, we might refer to a growing wave of studies and books that appeared in the late 1980s and the early 1990s concerning the ways of how to handle the Islamic phenomenon and all the changes it had produced.

Surely, the Arab and Islamic countries, or at least most of them, have harmonized completely with the new change. The policy of depleting the resources of the power of Islam started by purposely targeting places where communication with the public occurred as well as by tightening the circle around moderate Islamic groups.

Accordingly, a cold war was waged by the USA against the Islamic phenomenon. Hence, many experts forecasted that such a cold war would achieve success. Many studies about religious institutes and their influence on the masses in the area were issued, calling for the gradually elimination of such institutes. On this point, we remember how one Arab state leader was proud that he closed these religious institutes, explaining that he had saved his state from a US attack.

Some may think that the US cold war against the Islamic phenomenon was not against Islam itself; rather, it was against the Islamic movements or what were known as the political Islamic movements. However, the case was different, for this war took definite steps, adopting the Israeli theory called "The Bog and Mosquitoes". This theory is summarized as: You cannot fight mosquitoes partially or individually, but you should drain the bog in order to achieve your goal. Based on this theory, if mosquitoes represent terrorism, then the bog is Islam itself, the manifestations of adhering to the Islamic morals and fundamentals in the society, and the moderate Islamic movements. As long as the religion contributes in the activities of the state and the society, adherence to Islamic morals and teachings will increase, resulting in the non-violent Islamic movements, in general, having power and sometimes the violent ones as well, according to the surrounding circumstances.

Thus, the USA has turned against the Islamic phenomenon as a whole, while there is no Communist expansion to occupy this phenomenon or to which it may direct its efforts. Moreover, this turn has been accompanied by a good reception of Islam among many of the Arab and the Muslim masses. As a result, the USA has directed its efforts to prevent such a good response turning into a political success in any country, and to support the policy of confronting it, even by using force, as happened in many well-known Arab countries. Here, we should keep in mind that this situation coincides with the growing influence of Zionism in the US political decision-making procedure.

The Palestinian Case as a Witness to Oppression

Undoubtedly, the Palestinian issue has a special position in the Arab and Islamic mind, not only because of the sanctity of Palestine, regarding Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque, but also because of the brutal and clear oppression from which it suffers, both in the past and the present. The truth of the situation started to be clearer due to the increase in awareness and the media revolution which carried facts, supported with news and pictures, of the Palestinian first *Intifada* (at the end of 1987) to the Muslims. Furthermore, the second *Intifada* (*Intifada* of Al-Aqsa), with all its blood-baths, martyrs and sufferings, was presented audio visually and live to the whole world, describing the US bias, and the less biased position of the West.

Zionist Domination over the US Political Decision-Making Procedure

Certainly, the changes that occurred within the USA participated in deepening the US imperialistic policy against Arabs and Muslims. As witnessed by everyone, the Zionist influence in USA started to grow during the seventies of the twentieth century. However, this influence grew incredibly to the extent that it took control over the US foreign policies, particularly towards the Middle East, during the two presidential terms of Bill Clinton that started in 1992. This influence was very obvious in the course of the Oslo Agreement, followed by Camp David negotiations (July 2000) along with the unjust besiege of Iraq and the other issues related to the Iraqi case, despite Clinton's procrastination of fulfilling the demands of the Zionist forces calling for the occupation of Iraq. Unfortunately, the situation became worse after George W. Bush's won the presidential elections in 2000. The new conservative party, led by Zionists, took control over the US internal and external political decision-making procedure. In 1998, this party established the so-called coalition of "The New Imperial Century" after it made certain of the failure of the Oslo settlement in order to achieve the Zionist schemes. In this context, it is noteworthy to refer to the study known as "The Harvard Study," published in 2006 and prepared by the two famous academics "John Mearsheimer" and "Stephen Walt". This study proved the great extent of

the Israeli Lobby domination over the US foreign policies, referring to the Zionist scheme behind supporting the war on Iraq as well as pursuing the Iranian nuclear file as an American priority.

The Alignment of the Stance of the West with the US Policy

For decades, the stance of the West did not integrate with that of the US with regards to the critical cases in the area (i.e., the Middle East) to the extent it did during and after the second year of the war on Iraq. This common stance did not only concern a set of critical and significant situations, such as the issue of the *Hijâb* (i.e., veil) that aroused in France, and the pictures offending Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) along with the Western support of these issues, but it also went farther to include very important issues, like the Iraqi and Palestinian ones. This, in turn, caused a common feeling among the Muslims, declaring: "The West is allied against us, though the main assault is from the USA and Zionism."

Here, we point out that the semi-unified stance of the West against the Arabs and Muslims may be related, from one aspect, to the Western's worry of the danger that could result from a Muslim uprising and resolve to get rid of Western domination or, more precisely, the Western imperialism.

In this connection, we have to mention that this level of hatred against the West, particularly the USA, supported and triggered violence after the Muslim awakening and the spread of concepts of *Jihâd* (fighting in Allah's Cause), sacrifice and the culture of resistance among the Muslim youth along with the media revolution which reinforced the unity of the Muslim nation. When young people, in the prime of their youth, carried out martyrdom bombings in Turkey and London, it was futile to explain this situation as casual ideas or thoughts. This is despite the fact that many British circles have confirmed the connection between the London bombings and the British policies towards the Middle East. Moreover, this kind of atmosphere was not restricted to the Islamic awakening, but it also included large numbers of nationalists, leftists and secular elites who had no connection to the US agenda. Such parties opposed the US policies, and they called for a resistance against them.

Attacks on the Culture of Resistance and *Jihâd*

In the context of talking about violence and extremism, we should take into consideration that there is still an obvious attack being launched, under the excuse of fighting violence and terrorism, against the culture of resistance and *Jihâd* of the Muslim nation. This attack does not differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate violence. This is despite the fact that there are some sincere voices stressing the necessity of differentiating between blind violence and the legitimate resistance against occupation forces. However, such voices have not found any response. Instead, all forms of charity, committees entrusted with collecting and distributing *Zakâh* and charity foundations have been accused of supporting terrorism. In this way, the definition of violence has become unspecific so that it includes legitimate resistance.

In this regard, we should note that the attack on the culture of resistance, *Jihâd* and martyrdom actually aims at placing the nation in an unstable state so it will become unable to repel any aggression, particularly in this critical period of its history. There is no doubt that the *Intifada* of Al-Aqsa helped escalate this attack as it caused the Hebrew state to be subjected to unprecedented existential, political, social and economical threats. As a result, the world public opinion, particularly the European one, has increasingly sympathized with the Palestinian people. It, also, considers the Israeli state, with the USA following it, as the two states that endanger World peace and security the most, as indicated by a public opinion poll conducted by the European Union in 2002. This international situation has had severe impacts on Jews all over the world, particularly Sharon's Cabinet. This has put the situation under close examination in the political decision-making rooms in the USA and many European countries. It is very clear that Palestine has greatly participated in forming the culture of *Jihâd* and martyrdom in the mentality of the Muslim nation, especially during the years of the *Intifada* of Al-Aqsa. This goes back to a number of reasons:

First: Palestine (i.e., Jerusalem) represents a spiritual and sacred place for Arabs and Muslims.

Second: The legitimacy of resistance supported by juristic and political opinions, at least, which is adopted by the overwhelming majority of Muslims.

Third: Crimes of occupation and assassination of cadres and leaders have bad and deep effects on the Muslims' feelings. The most important cause, which should be highlighted, is the sweeping Islamic awakening in the Arab and Islamic countries as well as the media revolution that broadcasts the events of the *Intifada* and Palestinian sufferings to all the Muslims.

Moreover, the Iraqi resistance has astonished the occupation forces for they did not expect to find such a fierce resistance. This situation has contributed to the deepening of the crisis of attacking the culture of resistance and martyrdom in the Muslim nation. This Iraqi resistance has succeeded in thwarting the US scheme in Iraq, which was supposed to be followed by a domination of the area and then placing it under the command of the Zionist Master, after making it an example in order to spread fear in the hearts of other countries. Additionally, the situation in Afghanistan is escalating, which adds more tension as regards the attack on the culture of resistance and causes it to bring about opposite results.

In the same context of the attack launched on the culture of resistance, it can be said that the culture of martyrdom has been exposed to severe attack during the recent years, especially in Palestine where this culture has been practiced extensively before it moved to both Iraq and Afghanistan, in addition to other places, in a more sophisticated manner.

Initially, we should explain that the attack against martyrdom operations has nothing to do with the issue of legal permissibility or impermissibility. Rather, it is sufficient for the rational to know the purpose of the *Fatwâs* (Legal Opinions) stating the impermissibility of such operations, which is made clear when one realizes that the Americans and Israelis support them.

In fact, the reason behind targeting the martyrdom operations with such harsh criticism is because of their ability to break the balance of power, which is in favor of the enemy due to being heavily armed with the most

sophisticated weapons. These martyrdom operations were not restricted to the Muslims; rather, they were carried out in Sri Lanka by the Tamils on a wide scale. But, the Muslims in the recent years have been distinguished by carrying out such operations due to the growing Islamic expansion and the high tendency for self-sacrifice among the Muslim youth who have suffered from ruthless occupation.

No doubt these Martyrdom operations represent a powerful factor in the hands of the Muslims whose enemies want to deprive them of. These enemies aim to do this by carrying out comprehensive condemnation and incrimination, and raising doubts about such acts, referring to *Fatwâs* given by some scholars who lack foresight or those who are committed to official agencies that fall under the pressure of the US policy.

What about blind violence?

Of course, the culture of resistance, *Jihâd* and martyrdom has been used by some individuals in contexts that cause harm to the Muslim nation's plans for advancement. This is a natural situation; however, it should not be a basis for an absolute rejection of the nation's spirit of resistance. Moreover, it should not lead to an absolute rejection of the Islamic phenomenon under the fake excuse that it supports terrorism, as represented by the Israeli view: the theory of "The Bog and Mosquitoes." Instead, this situation should lead one to search for the causes which trigger this kind of violence and, ultimately, eliminate them. Hence, the Arab and Muslim citizen should feel that their ruling regimes are moving effectively towards rejecting the US and Zionist arrogance.

Concerning the blind, internal violence that targets national goals, there is a must to uproot its aforementioned causes. Further, scholars, movements and Muslim elites should participate in the process of spreading awareness. That is because the existence of some internal problems should not be taken as a reason to practice blind violence. Bearing this in mind, the judicious people of the nation should lead the path of reformation, regardless of the unease and problems of the situation.

A Brief Summary about the Two Kinds of Violence

Once again, we stress that we are facing two kinds of violence: one approved and the other disapproved. Hence, we must differentiate between them concerning the attitude and views of the public. Here, we are not innovating something new since every individual or state has two stances towards violence, whether approved or disapproved.

As for the blind violence that has stricken many Arab countries and Western civil targets, honesty requires us to say: "The moderate Islamic groups are not responsible for such violence. Moreover, the rationality of the Islamic groups is the cause that prevents bloodshed in the Arab and Islamic arenas. In many Arab countries, there are a considerable number of stimuli and motives for violence that could drive people to recklessly commit acts of violence. Yet, what prevent them from engaging in violence is the rationality of the scholars and Islamic movements, and sometimes the fear of the public in situations that require them to confront suppression, corruption and side-lining of religion in the life of the people.

Thereby, the solution of this problem will only be reached through boosting public participation in politics, thereby providing some kind of political plurality and so authority will not be monopolized. Additionally, the people would accept their current ruling regimes if the above-mentioned matters were preceded by a certain amount of reconciliation between the regime and the people, respect for their identity and religion, observance of independence, elimination of weakness and the rejection of the policy of making successive concessions. This is due to the fact that the people above all care about methodology more than the persons who actually apply it.

In the context of confronting blind violence, we should say that the Islamic movements and scholars have not shown negligence or relaxation in the process of confrontation and rationalization, even if they have not achieved all their aims. It should be known that without such efforts, the situation in the Arab and Islamic world would become worse.

Anyway, it would be nonsense to depict the situation as if there are civil wars still destroying everything in the Arab and Islamic world. Also, we should remember that this part of the world is experiencing political and ideological struggles that naturally lead to some kind of clash which, in return, involves some kind of violence. In the same vein, matters in the West did not become stable, as they are today, except after long civil wars in which millions of victims fell, although they did not have external super powers threatening them and encouraging internal dissension or putting them under siege.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, if there is no change in the US and Western practices towards the Muslim nation and its peoples, violence will continue, especially with the continuity of the Palestinian tragedy and the occupation of Iraq along with the imperialistic spirit dominating the dealings of the West with our nation and the whole nations of the Third World.

It is very clear that we are a wronged and oppressed nation that is not allowed to unite, achieve renaissance, harmonize with its religion and identity, or possess power. Rather, we are only allowed to be a consumer market and a source of raw materials. Moreover, we are only permitted to give up our independence and rights and accept disintegration and dependence.

This is a situation that will never be accepted by the nation's reform pioneers. In other words, the refusal and rejection which accompanies resistance will continue until the world is reshaped on new bases far from the rule of one party enslaving another. This matter will not be achieved unless a change occurs in the balance of power, making way for the development of a plurality of power, which, in return, will lead to balanced international relations. Such relations will not be restricted to the Arabs and Muslims, but they will apply to the whole world as well, especially when it is realized that those who suffer from the US monopolization of power are the majority and not the minority.



Political Dimension of Violence



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The suspension of legal Jihâd has led to the spread of evil powers at local, regional and international levels. It has also led to the increase of violence all over the world and caused great damage to the balance of international security. This chaos comes as a natural consequence of the suppression of the powers of right and justice, which will never be effective on earth except when emanating from and adhering to Islamic values.

Introduction

Terms such as "violence", "terrorism", "extremism" and "moderation" are often used in the press as well as in the various audio and visual media. The term "violence", as referred to in this paper, is closely related to the other terms. Hence, our discussion in this paper shall begin with an explanation of the connotations of each of the above-mentioned terms, since they will be repeatedly employed throughout this paper.

Violence (or *'Unf* in Arabic): This term linguistically refers to exercising excessive force with the aim of causing damage or abuse. It is the opposite of kindness. The adjective "violent" is used to describe someone who deals with matters harshly. Kindness involves good just as violence involves evil. The term *"Ta'nîf"* is another derivative of *'Unf*, and it means to reproach and scold.

The term "violence" is used according to its direct, linguistic sense in the *Sahîh* (authentic) *Hadîth*, when the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Indeed Allah is kind and He loves kindness and (He) gives for kindness what He does not give for violence or for any other deed."*[1]

Terrorism (*Irhâb* in Arabic): According to Ibn Manzûr, this term is derived from the root *"Rahaba"*, which means the use of intimidation to create an atmosphere of fear among the people. In this sense, Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"...And they stuck terror into them, and they presented a great (fear of) magic."}*** [Al-A'râf (Battlements): 116]

(1) Related by Imâm Muslim, Chapter entitled, *"Al-Bir wa As-Silah wa Al-Adâb"* (Righteousness, Relations and Etiquette).

The Muslim exegetes have interpreted this verse as referring to terrifying the people. According to Ibnul-Athîr, the root *"rahaba"* – i.e., to terrify and spread fear – is mentioned in eight Qur'anic verses, all of which are driven from the same root as mentioned above. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

{"... Those who are fearful of their Lord."}

[Al-A'râf (Battlements): 154]

Allah also says:

{"...And fear [only] Me!"} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 40]

Moreover, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...So fear only Me!"} [An-Nahl (Bees): 51]

These verses mean to fear Allah. This fear is derived from awe, which means absolute fear or fear[1] resulting in one being cautious not to sin etc. This means that the faithful people fear their Lord to a great extent[2].

Allah, Glory be to Him, also says:

{"...By which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy..."} [Al-Anfâl (Spoils): 60]

This means to deter the enemy[3].

In addition, Allah also says:

{"You [believers] arouse greater fear in their hearts (more) than Allah..."} [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 13]

This means that they fear you more than they fear Allah[4].

Further, Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"... They used to call on Us yearning and fearing..."}

[Al-Anbiyâ' (Prophets): 90]

(1) *"Safwat Al-Bayân Li Ma'ânî Al-Qur'ân"* (Eloquence in Interpreting the Meanings of the Qur'ân), page 14, by Sheikh Muhammad Makhlûf.

(2) ibid, page 222.

(3) Ibn Kathîr, "The Interpretation of the Qur'ân", 4/82.

(4) ibid, 8/74.

This verse means that they supplicated Allah to bestow upon them what is good and protect them from what is evil[1].

The enemies of Islam and Muslims, however, have misconstrued this term and presented it in a way which serves their malicious aims in order to misrepresent Islam in general. They have claimed that the term *"Rahaba"* – as came in the Qur'ân – means mass killing and destruction. They have even used this term exclusively with reference to Muslims. Contrarily, in Islamic terminology, the term *"Rahaba"* – and its derivatives – is cited in the Qur'anic Verse stating:

> ***{"...By which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy..."}*** [Al-Anfâl (Spoils): 60]

This verse should be interpreted according to the linguistic sense mentioned above, not according to what the enemies of Islam claim.

Extremism (*Tatarruf* in Arabic): According to Arabic linguistics, this term denotes being on the furthest point from the centre. It implies the opinions, ideas and actions, especially political or religious ones, which most people deem unreasonable and unacceptable. Allah, Glory be to Him, said:

> ***{"And of the people is he who worships Allah on the verge..."}*** [Al-Hajj (Pilgrimage): 11]

That is, to worship Allah following an extreme way in practicing one's religion, neither moderate nor well-versed. This term is conventionally used to express excessiveness and rigidity in dealing with matters.

Moderation (*Wasatiyyah* in Arabic): It is derived from the word "moderate". It is "being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme". The middle of an object is often considered to be its best. Hence, it has come to be used as a commendable attribute. In this respect, Allah describes the Muslim nation saying:

> ***{"And thus We have made you a median [i.e. moderate and just] community..."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

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(1) *"Zubdat At-Tafsîr"* (The Beauty of Interpretation), page 430, by Muhammad Sulaymân Al-Ashqar.

The term "moderation" is commonly used to refer to the adherence to the teachings of the Noble Qur'ân and Prophetic *Sunnah*. However, it has been used in some cases with the aim of turning Muslims away from pursuing the obligation of *Jihâd* and resisting their enemies.

Violence, Terrorism, Extremism and Moderation

A close reflection on the definition of the former terms will reveal the presence of some overlap but also some distinctiveness at the same time. In other words, violence includes terrorism since every violent action must be terrifying. Terrorism, however, concerning its meaning of deterring, may and may not include violence, depending on the circumstances therein. For example, the process of armament deters the warring enemy, but it may not result in actual violence or conquering the enemy's land, seizing its property or capturing women and children. Rather, it also indirectly deters those enemies with whom there is no actual fighting.

Violence may involve extremism if exercised excessively. It may, however, involve 'moderation' in the case the latter demands carrying out the obligation of *Jihâd* in line with the commands of the Noble Qur'ân and Honorable *Sunnah*. Likewise, 'terrorism' (or *Irhâb* in Arabic) may also be implied in the meaning of 'moderation' if used in its sense as introduced in the Noble Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. On the other hand, it may be rendered as abstract extremism.

In the same context, 'extremism' may be situated between violence and terrorism, but has no connection with moderation. We cannot say, for instance, "This is an extreme moderation", nor can we say, "This is a moderate extremism". There is an apparent contradiction between moderation and extremism.

Moderation may involve violence and terrorism, according to the particular situation wherein it is used, rendering both violence and terrorism in such a situation as methods for the actualization of 'moderation'. For instance, resisting an assaulting enemy by the use of violence and terrorism is a kind of moderation as is perceived in the Noble Qur'ân and *Sunnah*.

Violence: Principles and Inclinations

We must differentiate between the use of violence for the sake of defending principles and for the sake of fulfilling personal whims and inclinations. In the first case, if the principle - for which violence is exercised - is unjust, then violence accordingly will be unjust and vain. But if the principle is just, then there needs to be some elaboration on the violence that will be used to know if it is just or unjust. However, violence is unwarranted in itself if it is used to fulfill personal whims or desires. But, if using violence fulfills some people's rights in any way, then it is acceptable in virtue of the right it seeks to achieve, taking into consideration that acceptance here is only outwardly, since the hidden intentions behind it are judged only by Allah, Glory be to Him.

Let us be more specific and consider the following:

There are two major guiding principles:

First: Islam, the Divine religion.

Second: Every thing other than Islam, namely, man-made principles.

The difference between the two categories is that the religion of Islam achieves happiness for humanity but any thing other than Islam brings about distress and misery. In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, said:

> ***{"And whoever turns away from My Remembrance - indeed, he will have a straitened [i.e. difficult] life..."}*** [Ṯâ-Hâ: 124]

Accordingly, Islam does not stipulate any kind of violence unless it is based on a *Shar'î* text, either from the Qur'ân or the authentic Prophetic *Sunnah*. Thus, if violence is used within the frame of the *Shar'î* text, then it becomes legally warranted as long as it supports people's rights and justice. As such, violence may also bring about welfare and success to humankind, provided that it is based on the rules of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. This means that the framework in which it is implemented should be Islamic. Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"...And who is better in judgment than Allah for a people who have firm Faith."}*** [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 50]

If violence, in its political perspective, is used within this frame, then it is valid, not for its own sake, but for the immediate and later merits and interests it realizes.

As for violence arising from seeking guidance through relying on laws other than those of Islam, it is undoubtedly restricted to the fulfillment of personal whims. It is either constitutionally codified or arbitrarily left to satisfy the desires of those who practice it. Such violence nourishes feelings of being oppressed and deepens its effects, ruins people's lives, destroys their hopes and increases their grievances. The only one way through which the oppressed people can free themselves from the shackles of this violence is to follow the path of Islam (living in an Islamic environment). Otherwise, they shall remain a prey to this oppressive violence as long as they do not take Islam as their true guidance in life. Therefore, the message inviting people to embrace Islam should be propagated and spread on a wide scale. In the light of this noble cause, all Islamic institutions all over the world should unite their efforts to convey this message to people in all corners of this earth, pursuant to the Qur'anic command stating:

> *{"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction..."}* [An-Nahl (Bees):125]

Hereby, the use of violence should not be exercised beyond its *Shar'ī* rules that govern it. Whoever transgresses the limits of this principle will surely be responsible before Allah, Glory be to Him, for assuming an illegal way to convey the message and for misrepresenting Islam, incurring negative reactions against it. Such a misrepresentation of Islam may drive away non-Muslims from embracing it, although, in reality, it leads them to salvation and prosperity.

Codifying Dogmatic Violence

Legislative codification of dogmatic violence means to enact particular laws, based on dogmatic ideologies, that sanction the use of violence. In this context, we shall discuss the following dogmas:

1. Communism

Communism was a system of government that dominated the former Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries for nearly seventy years. It is still in force in China, North Korea and Cuba up till now.

The communist regimes endorsed oppressive laws that legalized the use of all forms of violence against anything that showed the least opposition.

Millions of Muslims, living under this oppressive regime, fell as victims to these laws; many were killed or tortured by the communists, others were exiled to Siberia where they died of cold and starvation, and numerous persons were forced to flee to mountains where the majority of them died and only a few could survive. The communists committed all these crimes under the pretext of executing laws they had legislated with the aim of spreading mischief and devastation on earth.

2. Colonialism

The Islamic world has experienced very severe kinds of oppression for long centuries, during which the colonial powers used the most aggressive kinds of violence. The imperialistic countries, which harbor severe hatred towards Islam, assaulted the Muslim countries, occupied their land and looted their wealth. They practiced acts of repression against the Muslims, massacred, imprisoned, displaced and humiliated them, violated their honor and treated them like slaves. European countries, such as England, France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Yugoslavia, were actively involved in the Crusades, which were supported by unjust, proclaimed laws. These military assaults, accompanied by cruel malice, are still directed against the Muslim world, either directly or collectively, being backed up by NATO allies or international institutions under the excuse of the so-called "Anti-terrorism Wars". These countries collectively committed ferocious crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq, far beyond what the early crusaders had perpetrated. Pages of history would be too ashamed to record the heinous massacres and barbaric practices committed by these Crusaders against Muslims in these two countries. Had it not been documented by videos and eye witnesses, no human could have believed them.

These countries, motivated by the crusade spirit, cannot stand hearing the name of Islam, let alone its followers. Therefore, they brought destruction to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Eastern Timor and the Philippines, killed Muslims and destroyed their properties in a way that could not be imagined, even by predatory animals living in the jungle.

Under the umbrella of their prescribed laws, these countries used every kind of destructive and internationally banned weapons – according to their own categorization – including neutron bombs, limited nuclear bombs, cluster bombs, napalm bombs and mass-destruction bombs. Their cruel hands reached everything: people, mosques, schools, hospitals, care center for the elderly, kindergartens, markets and houses. They virtually destroyed all manifestations of life. Their abominable crimes exceeded every sense of the word "violence". Muslims, men, women, children and even infants, have paid the price for belonging to their creed by being the victims of spiteful, cruel violence, stemming from historical hatred that was codified by constitutional legislations.

3. International Zionism

The codification of dogmatic violence in the international Zionism movement was initiated by the formation of the Zionist entity in Palestine, which is supported by the Jews all over the world, (especially) the European counties and the United States. This entity was established in 1948 A.D. with the dead bodies of the Palestinian martyrs. The Jews practiced and still practice ethnic violence under the slogan of "The Chosen People of Allah". They believe that other people have been created just to serve them.

The Zionist entity consolidated its existence following the war of 1967, when it managed to occupy the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai and the Golan Heights. The Palestinian Muslims, however, did not submit to the power of this despotic entity. They stood against it in the hope of regaining their freedom and independence. Unfortunately, they were suppressed by the most atrocious forms of violence practiced by the Jews in order to repress and displace them by killing, detaining and tormenting the people: men,

women and children. They also began to demolish houses over the heads of their inhabitants, scoop up agricultural lands, cut off water and electricity supplies, tighten the siege over the country, close the crossing points and build the apartheid wall, which turned the West Bank into a concentration camp. They used all forms of starvation, intimidation and suppression against the Palestinians. Their aircrafts, tanks, armored vehicles and all kinds of bombs, including cluster and napalm bombs, targeted the uprising Palestinians.

4. Some Arab and Islamic Regimes

Some Arab and Islamic regimes, driven by their desire to please their masters, cannot bear Islam and those advocating the adoption of the Islamic Law as the source of all enacted laws and systems. First, they created non-Islamic constitutions, many of their relative laws are meant to severely torment those calling others to Allah, men and women, through imprisonment, torture or killing. As a result, calling others to Allah, Glory be to Him, in some of these Islamic countries has become a criminal stigma for the callers. Not only that, but even wearing the Islamic veil by Muslim women became a wicked act, from the perspective of the constitutions of those countries!

Such regimes imposed a strong censorship over mosques, schools, institutes, universities, companies and institutions in both the private and the public sectors. They spread spies and planted eyes everywhere to the degree that they turned the life of their Muslim citizens into unbearable nightmares. These are the gruesome consequences of the codified violence such constitutions allow and protect.

5. Islam

Islam is the religion of Allah, Glory be to Him, which He chose for His servants. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 19]

Accordingly, it is a religion firmly associated with the concept of justice. Allah, the Almighty, says:

> *{"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded."}* [An-Nahl (Bees): 90]

In this way, the use of force, when applying the laws of Allah, Glory be to Him, is justifiable since it aims to achieve justice and welfare for the people. The religion of Islam is the religion of moderation. In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> *{"And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just and moderate] community..."}* [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

This means that the permissible use of force, inferred from the Qur'anic and prophetic texts, reflects the vision of moderation, as illustrated above. The Islamic *Shari'ah* came to achieve the well-being of humanity and maintain its welfare through the following fundamental principles:

a- Maintaining religion: This is realized by confessing Faith, i.e., to testify that there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is His Messenger. The rejection of this duty is to be met by launching *Jihâd* and legalizing the punishment for apostasy.

b- Maintaining the human self: This can be achieved (by looking after the self, e.g.,) through nourishment: food and drink. The illicit violation of this duty is to be met by legislating the punishment of retribution (i.e. a life for a life etc.).

c- Maintaining the preservation of humankind: This is achieved through legitimate conjugal relationships. The legal punishments for adultery and slander have been legislated for the violation of this licit bond.

d- Maintaining the human reason: This is achieved by means of nourishment with good food and drink. The desecration of this grace by the consumption of alcohol and wine requires the legislation of the punishment for drinking (alcohol).

e- Maintaining property: This is realized by devising certain legal financial transactions. The punishment for committing theft or fraud is legislated for violating this principle.

Generally speaking, the frames of existence and absence of these interests and principles are mentioned by Ash-Shâṭibî in his book *Al-Muwâfaqât* (Agreements) He said:

> "Maintaining the frames of existence and absence as regards these principles involves two matters. The first one is by keeping up their requisites and consolidating their foundations by means of preserving their existence. The second is by averting an existing or a potential impediment of them, by means of preventing the existence of this impediment."(1)

Considering the above-mentioned discussion, it should be noted that keeping up these legal fundamental principles is achieved by keeping up *Jihâd* and the penal codes as described above. Although these deterring penalties are rigid, they are necessary and praiseworthy since they ensure justice, remove oppression and achieve moderation. Thus, the suspension of *Jihâd* and absence of penal codes represent extremism and constitute deviation from justice. This is because such suspension hinders the accomplishment of the legal fundamental principles, which Allah, Glory be to Him, has decreed for His servants through the Revelation of His Book and His command to follow the orders of the Prophet (PBUH). Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"He who obeys the messenger has obeyed Allah..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 80]

Ibnul-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) explained this in his book entitled *"I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în"* (Informing Imâms) when he said:

> "The Islamic *Sharî'ah* is based on legal rules and the realization of people's interests in this world and in the Hereafter. It is all about achieving justice, effecting mercy and spreading wisdom. Any matter that deviated from justice to injustice, from mercy

(1) Ash-Shâṭibî, *"Muwâfaqât"*, 2/8.

to cruelty, from welfare to malevolence, or from wisdom to frivolity has nothing to do with the *Sharî'ah*, even if it has entered into it by means of false interpretations.[1]"

The suspension of *Jihâd* has led to the eruption of evil powers at the local, regional and international level. It has also led to the spread of violence all over the world and caused a serious disorder in the balance of international security. This is and will be a natural outcome as long as the powers of right and justice are inhibited; such powers will not be effective on earth except if they emanate from the rulings and teachings of Islam.

Kinds of Violence

Violence can be perceived from many perspectives through which it can be classified into the following categories:

1. Individual Violence

Individual violence has many aspects, but we are mainly concerned with its political side. Many individuals have chosen the path of individual violence as a means to realize their political goals. This kind of violence may end up causing the destruction of its perpetrator. Also, this may engender a state of emotional congestion and suppression because of the gross injustice that is present, which deserves sacrificing souls to reduce or eliminate it. Martyrdom operations are included in this kind of violence. In this connection, the enemies of Islam describe martyrdom operations as terrorist attacks, which is a big misconception. How can acts of resisting occupation, an occupation that practices all forms of aggression, be put on equal level with terrorism and, at the same time, the occupation itself is not considered as real terrorism?!

Hence, individual violence as resistance to aggressive occupation forces is a legitimate form of self-defense that should be supported by all licit means. This is a duty that should be fulfilled by the advocates of right, be

(1) Ibnul-Qayyim; *"I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în"* (Informing Imâms), 3/3.

they individuals, groups or countries. On the other hand, failing to support it or hindering the efforts directed to serve its cause means the approval and support of oppression and injustice.

2. Faction-biased Violence

This is a kind of violence practiced among factions to achieve political goals. This includes acts of assassinations, bombings, destruction of properties and intimidation.

This type of violence can be tackled from two perspectives:

- If it is exercised as a means to fight and resist the occupation, then it is legally warranted, provided that it is governed by the rules of the Islamic *Sharī'ah*.

- If it is exercised for the sake of taking revenge from the ruling regimes, while indiscriminatingly risking lives and endangering properties of innocent people without any legal justification, then it is not approved. The reason is that it will consequently provide these regimes with sufficient excuses to severely react with oppression and injustice. In most cases, only innocent people pay the price.

3. Government Violence

This is the type of violence exercised by the ruling regimes against their people, who are punished for no more than expressing their opinions, and who are thrown into prisons just on the basis of suspicion. Such an atmosphere has created much distrust and fear in the society. The government violence cannot be resisted by the people except in rare cases. The government uses its armed forces, the police, the intelligence and other security institutions, builds more prisons, tortures the innocent, and kills them by hanging or shooting. All this is done with no trials, as stated by the emergency laws. Whoever does not yield to these regimes is counted among the misfortunate political opposition, which, under these regimes, has no real existence. Government violence is practiced in many countries, including the totalitarian, despotic and even some of the so-called democratic regimes.

4. International Violence

This is the form of violence practiced by a country or a nation against other countries or nations, as is now carried out by some countries or as was carried out by the former Soviet Union. All forms of this violence are totally rejected. Such violence is practiced by the superpower nations to plunder the wealth of the weak ones. It also serves the agenda of the occupation to loot the occupied country's natural resources, especially oil. That is why all the people of the world must jointly and firmly resist and eliminate this violence, which suppresses their freedom, plunders their wealth and interferes with their affairs. These aggressive countries have managed, by using all means of pressure, to manipulate the United Nations as a tool to achieve their goals, which they have deceivingly described as the execution of the International Legality and the like. They have done so for no other reason but to achieve their criminal goals. Ironically, these countries count these brutal crimes as ways of fighting terrorism!

5. Ethnic and Sectarian Violence

This is a kind of violence practiced in many parts of the world. It is caused by hateful fanaticism that has no sound or rational proof. People should unswervingly withstand any form of violence induced by fanaticism since it leads to shedding blood, women becoming widows, orphaning children and ruining properties. Such violence is futile and these crimes may end up without any victory for either side. The colonial powers may fuel ethnic and sectarian violence because it paves the way for them to achieve their goals and occupy new areas, as in Darfur, and consolidate their power and existence in some areas they have already occupied, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The eradication of such violence can only be accomplished by the prudent groups on all sides. They are the ones on whom hopes are laid to get rid of this kind of violence.

Causes of Violence

Political violence does not appear from nothing: It is the outcome of many combined factors that progressively interact with each other and result in the manifestation of violence. It is like the interaction of different elements in the bottom of the earth that causes them to burst out in the form of volcanoes. There are many factors that lie behind political violence, the most outstanding of which are the religious, dogmatic, political, social, economic, cultural, security, legal, administrative, historical, geographical, environmental, military and ethnic motives. Violence erupts because of all or some of these factors, taking into consideration that each factor varies as to how it affects the way violence is stirred up as a whole. Also, these factors have different impacts on the resulting violence according to the particular setting in which they are active, whether at the level of the individual, faction, people, country, army, police, intelligence or whatever.

This is one perspective through which we can ponder over the reasons behind violence. Yet, there is another equally important perspective represented by the interpretation of the direct causes of violence. The most prominent of these causes are:

1. Suppression of freedom of expression and curbing opinions whether in a spoken, written or televised form.
2. Political despotism and dictatorship, and the absence of the concept of democracy and consultation.
3. Doing injustice (in the name of the law or anything else) and confiscation of human rights.
4. Favoritism in giving advantages to the powerful and the rich at the expense of scientists and qualified experts.
5. Impoverishment.
6. Violation of the right to have personal beliefs and people's private affairs.
7. Unjust exploitation of authorities.
8. Aggression against the self, be it an individual, group or a nation. Occupation is an example of this.

Violence resulting from resisting any of the above-mentioned eight causes may be justifiable, in principle, as it responds to the requisites of human nature and divine laws.

Reactions to Violence

Violence is an action, and every action generates a counteraction. However, with regard to violence, the counteraction does not necessarily have to be equal in proportion to the action. The individual cannot react to government violence in the same proportion, and cannot, in some cases, be able to react at all, especially if that individual is put in prison in an unknown place.

The reaction to violence may take various forms, subject to the abilities and circumstances. Yet, in all cases, violence is answered with violence, regardless of such circumstances. In this way, violent actions grow and spread. However, we should differentiate between two kinds of violence: instigative violence (categorized as injustice) and counteractive violence (categorized as the restoration of rights). Those parties that are not involved in a given conflict between the instigative unjust violence and the counteractive, right-restoring violence have to stand against the oppressors and eliminate their violence. At the same time, they should support the violence used for the sake of restoring rights. Otherwise, these non-biased parties will be indirectly approving of the injustice committed before their eyes. For example, when the Jews occupied Palestine in 1947 (the year of partition), they displaced its people, killed them collectively (e.g., the massacres of Dayr Yassin, Kafr Qassem and others) and usurped their land and properties, using the severest forms of violence. They repeated their aggression in 1967 in order to tighten their grip over the whole of Palestine, including Jerusalem. The Israelis dominated the Al-Aqsa Mosque and severely tormented the Palestinians. However, the Palestinians did not give up, but they responded to this violence with its like by way of self-defense in the hope of restoring their plundered land and rights. Now one may ask: How should the world have responded to this flaming conflict?!

The European countries and the United States openly backed up the oppressive Jews, supporting them financially, politically and by giving military assistance. Other countries secretly provided support to the Jews, while others remained neutral. As for the Arab and Muslim regimes, their positions ranged between these three stances.

In this regard, the Palestinian reaction has been disproportionate to that of the Israeli violence, due to the apparent difference in capabilities. The unarmed Palestinians literally stand in the face of the Israeli weaponry with nothing but stones! Given these circumstances, do they not have the right to defend themselves, even by blowing themselves up, in order to repel the barbaric, Israeli violence?! This case applies to all the powers in the world that resist occupiers' violence.

Consequences of Violence

Each form of violence, whether it is committed by an individual, a party, and whether it is public or international, brings about certain effects. The more severe the violence, the more perilous and the wider spectrum of consequences it produces. After all, the consequences of violence are either material or psychological. The material impact occurs immediately, for it is the direct outcome of violence, and it can be easily alleviated after its occurrence. Many of the countries which were the victims of aggression - like those engaged in World War II, the Korean War, Egypt after the tripartite aggression and Lebanon after the civil war that had torn it apart for years - have succeeded in getting rid of the material impact of such an aggression. However, the psychological impact may linger for a long time, and could affect many generations to come, even for centuries. The effect touches upon all aspects of society including political, economic, security, cultural and many other aspects that could leave scars in the minds and hearts of the persons involved in these aspects.

For example, the psychological impact of the Battle of Badr, which occurred 15 centuries ago and in which the combat between Muslims and the polytheists was manifested in its most powerful form with the angels aiding the Muslims, still lingers in the minds of the Muslims.

Muslims all over the world, regardless of their ethnic or geographical denominations, still draw lessons of pride and commitment to their faith from this battle, which constantly rejuvenates firm determination to confront the enemy and strive hard to achieve victory. The inspiration resulting from Badr affected and is still significantly affecting all the aspects that boost the prosperity of the Muslim society. Undoubtedly, the spirit of Badr runs in the blood of every zealous Muslim who honors his religion and is dedicated to obeying his Lord. This spirit played the greatest role in motivating Muslims to carry out *Jihâd* (fighting in the cause of Allah) in different parts of the world.

The psychological impact of violence multiplies and extends as time goes by. This impact is either positive, as the one resulting from Badr, or negative, like the one resulting from the violence practiced by the communist and capitalistic regimes. Although violence can be contained and eliminated, its impact or results are very difficult to control, especially when these effects greatly exceed their expected limits, as in the case when a state launches a war against another state, but is then unable to end it.

State violence is most often met by demonstrations, strikes and violations of the law. It can also lead to disruption and severe damage to public services and utilities, leaving significant effects on the social structure and political regimes.

Some countries may manipulate violence or even perpetrate it in order to falsely justify another pre-meditated evil and claim that it is a reaction to the violence they had suffered. The United States, for instance, took the September 11th attacks as a pretext to wage successive wars against Islam and Muslims all over the world, the most important of which were the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. These events considerably affected the process of Islamic activities all over the world and led to its constriction as well as the closure of many of its institutions in the name of 'the war against terrorism'. Detention camps, like Guantanamo Prison and Abu Gharib Prison, in addition to many other secret prisons in Europe, have been opened. Moreover, many Muslims have been imprisoned, their properties have been confiscated and their institutions have been closed. Also, a feverish campaign has been launched to fight all Islamic charitable activities in Muslim and non-Muslim countries. The consequences of violence resulting from these acts still reverberate all over the world.

Who can Confront Violence and How?

This, indeed, is a good question. Evil, no matter how far it spreads, can be extinguished by the power of goodness in many ways. Here are some of these ways:

- *Jihâd* activities, many of which are presently being carried on in some fronts in the world.
- Mobilization of the Public, such as the Palestinian Intifadas, the coup that toppled Ceauşescu in Romania or that which deposed the late *Shâh* of Iran.
- The activities of syndicates, forums and students' unions.
- Media and different methods of communication, such as satellite channels, the press, magazines, and other audio or visual methods.
- Political parties, formal unions, civil society institutions and human rights organizations.
- Centers of research, translation and publication.

These are some of the ways through which violence of the authoritarian powers can be confronted. Fighting such violence needs skillful, distinguished men who have a high degree of intelligence and a spirit of perseverance and challenge.

Violence: Dictatorship and Democracy

The despotic regimes as well as those which claim to be democratic practice all forms of violence, especially of the political type. However, each regime has its own characteristic way of being violent.

Under such despotic regimes, freedom is very much limited to the ruling regimes. These regimes often use two main approaches in order to perpetuate their dictatorship: the nationalization of the media and the control of educational curricula. This way, they follow the despotic example of the Pharaohs to accomplish their goals as Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> ***{"I (the Pharaoh) do not show you except what I see, and I do not guide you except to the way of the right conduct."}***
>
> [Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 29]

The tendency towards these two approaches represented the adoption of Pharaoh's method in dealing with his adversaries when his entourage informed him that Moses (PBUH) was a real danger to his despotic regime. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> *{"And the eminent among the people of Pharaoh said, 'Will you leave Moses and his people to cause corruption in the land and abandon you and your gods?' [Pharaoh] said, 'We will kill their sons and keep their women alive; and indeed, we are victorious over them"}* [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 127]

This is the severest form of oppression against his opponents. This is a common characteristic of all domineering dictatorial regimes. Also the Pharaoh gave an order to mutilate the bodies of the magicians who abandoned his authority and believed in Moses' message. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> *{"[Pharaoh] said, 'You believed him [i.e. Moses] before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees, and you will surely know which of us is more severe in punishment and more enduring"}* [Ţâ-Hâ: 71]

Long before this incident, the Pharaoh gave a command to kill every newly born male child, as he was warned by a soothsayer that a woman from the Children of Israel would give birth to a child who would remove him from power. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"And [recall] when We saved you [i.e. your forefathers] from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, slaughtering your sons and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord."}*
>
> [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 49]

Accordingly, we can conclude that carrying out harsh forms of violence is an inherent characteristic in dictatorial regimes. Through the use of violence, whether lawfully or unlawfully, these regimes can ensure that the people will only say and do what satisfies the rulers. The nationalization of

the media consolidates the repressive power of ruling regimes, while the control of the curricula so as to preserve its interests ensures that successive generations will be brought up to be accustomed to subjection and fear of expressing any opinion that opposes the ruling regime.

These dictatorial, totalitarian regimes do not hesitate to liquidate or torture their opponents, even if they are their own kin or among their members, if they were found disloyal or not steadfast in assuming their duties, especially if such duties concern the personal security of the members of these regimes. Moreover, such regimes perpetrate conspiracies and then allege they were weaved against them, finding in this an excuse to immediately liquidate their opponents, whether they are members of the public, the military or the security forces.

To ensure the maximum security measures, these dictatorial, totalitarian regimes surround themselves with multiple circles of oppressive security institutions; each having a different label, obligation and effective intelligence apparatus. Many of the people are put on the 'wanted' lists compiled by these apparatuses, while they do not know what they are charged with or how their end will be.

This dictatorial violence exhaustedly suppresses the public's resistance activities and reduces them to live in virtual enslavement to the ruling regime. The Noble Qur'ân narrated the statements of Moses (PBUH) to the Pharaoh:

> ***{"And is this a favor of which you remind me - that you have enslaved the Children of Israel?"}*** [Ash-Shu'arâ' (The Poets): 22]

The violence practiced by the dictatorial regimes is not exclusively directed against those whom the regimes accuse of disloyalty; but it also extends to their wives, children, relatives and friends. Their embassies pursue and target the active subjects living abroad, assassinating or secretly kidnapping and shipping them back to their countries where they are inhumanly jailed and tortured. They may be lured by allegedly receiving false amnesty and a promise of a safe return to their homes. Once they have returned to their countries, they face imprisonment with nobody knowing where they are detained.

The oppressive regime may indiscriminatingly inflict the scourge of torment on the people by shelling whole cities from land and air so that they cruelly demolish the houses over the heads of their inhabitants. As it dominates the media, the regime often conceals the real number of victims, which most often include men, women and children.

Some dictatorial regimes order their security apparatus to murder the detainees without trial and bury them in mass graves.

As for those regimes that allege to be democratic, a thorough consideration of their policies makes it evident that many of them practice political violence, even to the same extent as the dictatorial ones. However, they claim that they practice such violence under the umbrella of the law. Some may even not be ashamed of declaring that their atrocious practices have no legal cover. Examples of such cases are so many.

Particularly, Muslim activists are the first to pay the price of violence committed by these oppressive regimes which claim to be democratic. When dealing with any issue related to Islam, these regimes abandon the path of democracy and inflict the severest form of violence on Muslims by imprisonment, invading their countries, breaking into their homes, violating the privacy of their women, unjustifiably shedding their blood and destroying their property. For example, when Russia deserted communism (during the Soviet Union administration) in favor of democracy, it did not change its violent practices against Muslims. In spite of its purported adoption of democracy, Russia is still committing genocide against the people of Chechnya, just as it did in Afghanistan during the dictatorial communism.

The state security apparatuses of democratic regimes, including the army, police, intelligence services, special forces and central security forces, usually use violence as viciously as it is used by the totalitarian regimes. Furthermore, they quell their people if they go on demonstrations or strikes.

In the democratic regimes, violence is not only practiced by the governments but it is also practiced by the political parties against one another to the extent that it may reach the level of public clashes and assassinations. Violence may also be adopted by members of parliament against one another even under the roof of the parliament!!

To conclude, if violence is not restrained in accordance with the principles of rightness and justice, and this can only be achieved under Islam, it will remain a stain on the foreheads of the ruling regimes which carry it out in various forms and ways, regardless of whether they are dictatorial or democratic.

It is really ironic that the United States (the 'democratic' state) alleges that it aims to spread democracy in the world and to achieve liberty, security and welfare for people, while it uses its powerful armies to annihilate them!!

Violence and International Events

The cold war lasted from the end of the World War II till the collapse and dissolution of the former Soviet Union into independent states. This collapse has caused great damage to the international balance of power and resulted in the United States' domination over international politics. The American dominance has inspired other countries to work to play an influential role in international policy.

China, for example, has emerged as a significant economic and military power. North Korea, Pakistan and India have emerged as nuclear capabilities in addition to the emergence of some influential powers such as Iran. NATO has become more powerful after expanding its number of members so as to include twenty six states.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia came out so weak that it lost its influential role in shaping the international map of the world. However, the soaring increase in the oil and gas prices has restored Russia's economic position. Moreover, Russia has won American and European support for its war against Chechnya since they share the same ideology in their fight against Islam under the pretext of combating terrorism.

The dynamics of the international conflict have changed and resulted in numerous cases of excessive violence that are proportionate to the power, nature and speed of the current changes and the newly-formed entities. Such violence is still in effect. We can summarize some reasons for this as follows:

1. The appearance of the Islamic revival at the international level.
2. The activities of *Jihâd* in Afghanistan, which was the direct reason behind the collapse of communism.
3. The dissolution of the Soviet Union.
4. The establishment of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.
5. The attacks of September 11, 2001.
6. The successive Palestinian Intifadas that have always taken Islam as a slogan.

All these events were met with violence. We notice, however, that the common denominator of these events is the war against Islam. Many western writers, politicians and economists in addition to some European and American study and research centers have openly admitted that the international conflict is currently based between Islam (in general, without naming any particular Muslim state) and the West (including the European Union, America, Russia, Japan, Australia and some other countries).

In an article entitled "The Next Clash between Islam and the West", published on the 30th of October 2006, the author referred to "the intention of a British coalition consisting of politicians and people from the media to combat the trends and traditions of the Muslim communities in Britain, regarding them as a separatist movement[1]". Such attitudes against Muslim communities is exacerbating in many European countries as well as in America betokening imminent dangerous clashes.

Examples of Violence

From political and dogmatic perspectives, not all kinds of violence are abominable and evil. Violence can be divided into two kinds:

Legitimate: i.e. when practiced to uphold the truth and resist oppression.

Illegitimate: i.e. when practiced to fight against the truth, spread evil and support oppression.

Here are some examples of both kinds:

(1) Al-Qabas Newspaper (Kuwait), 20 Shawwâl 1427 A.H., corresponding to 11 Nov. 2006 A.D.

The First Kind: The Legitimate Violence:

The First Example: *Jihâd* (fighting in Allah's cause). There are numerous evidences from Qur'ân and *Sunnah* to support this example as Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 216]

He also says:

> ***{"Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if you only knew."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 41]

Allah, the Almighty, also says:

> ***{"Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the Religion of Truth [i.e. Islam] from among those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the tax with willing submission and have been belittled."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance):29]

He also says:

> ***{"...And fight against the disbelievers collectively as they fight against you collectively..."}*** [At-Tawbah (Repentance):36]

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) waged all his battles guided by the laws of these Qur'anic verses. These battles included those of Badr, Banû Qaynuqâ', Uhud, Banun-Nadîr, Al-Ahzâb, Banû Quraydhah, Banul-Mustaliq, Khaybar, the Conquest of Mecca, Hunayn, At-Tâ'if, Tabûk in addition to a great number of other battles and expeditions. After the death of the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslim battles, including the Wars of Apostasy, the Conquest of the Persian and Byzantine Empires, Eastern Asia, the West and South of Africa and then the North of Europe, were also governed by these Qur'anic laws.

The violence associated with these battles can be classified as legal, since it was a *Jihâd* (fighting in Allah's cause) in order to change humans from worshipping humans (and abiding by humans laws) to worshipping (and accepting to abide by the laws of) the Lord of all the people, so that there would be no more *Fitnah* (disbelief and polytheism) and the religious life will all be for Allah, Alone. Moreover, *Jihâd* in Islam does not warrant the killing of those who do not participate in the war, such as women or children.

The Second Example: The wars undertaken to resist the invaders throughout Islamic history. The most outstanding examples of these wars are those that resisted the Tatars' invasion and also the Crusaders' invasion of the Muslim lands, especially Jerusalem. These crusading assaults claimed the lives of millions of Muslim martyrs. Another example is the current Palestinian resistance of the Jewish occupation of their land, and the struggle of Muslims against the invaders and occupiers in other areas.

The Second Kind: The Illegitimate Violence:

The Most Prominent Example: killing, pillaging and destruction of crops and people committed by the Jewish occupation forces in Palestine.

The Israeli occupation forces have been systematically committing massacres and genocide in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip since the first Palestinian Intifada broke out in 1987. The Gaza Strip correspondent of the Kuwaiti Al-Qabas Newspaper, 'Abdur-Razzâq Abû Garz, reported - as an eye witness - the massacre committed by the Israeli occupation troops on the 8th of November 2006, in Bayt Hânûn (after the Israeli army had earlier declared its withdrawal from it on the 7th November 2006). He said:

"A horrible shock! A state of bewilderment! All expressions of condemnation and denouncement cannot describe the massacres and genocide the Israeli occupation troops committed against the unarmed Palestinians, including women and children. The Israelis deceived the Palestinians by announcing a fake withdrawal from the village of Bayt Hânûn on the 7th of November 2006 to lure the Palestinians to return to

their demolished homes. Unfortunately, they set an ambush for them on their way back home and harvested them using tank shelling."

Then, he described the tragedy that afflicted a whole family as a result of this shelling, saying:

"Remains of human bodies and blood were mixed with the debris of Al-`Athâmenah's four-story house. All the members of Al-`Athâmenah's family were martyred or wounded after the occupation forces deliberately bombarded their house with tanks. When they saw the first shell falling on the house, the people hurried to check what had happened to the family, but unfortunately the occupation forces had trapped them inside the house. Among the martyrs were children whose heads and limbs were cut off; others were killed while sleeping in addition to many others who were martyred while getting ready to go to school. There was a big pool of blood at the entrance of Al-`Athâmenah's house in which 13 members of the family were martyred. The eye-witnesses asserted that the people ran aimlessly in the streets, seeking for a shelter to protect themselves from the shells that chased them everywhere until they reached the schools run by the UNRWA on the outskirts of the village, where they could find safety. Hospitals in Northern Gaza Strip were packed with bodies of the martyrs and the injured, and many of the wounded were rushed to a hospital in Gaza City to receive medical treatment."(1)

Finally, in this context I would like to refer to other cases of the Jewish, barbaric aggression against the Palestinians, among them are:

- The expulsion of the Palestinians from their lands and confiscation of their properties to build thousands of settlements in order to settle the usurping immigrants.
- The random and deliberate demolition of Palestinians' houses by tanks and air force planes, alleging that they were owned by people who are actively involved in the Intifada or who performed martyrdom operations against the occupation forces. Under this pretext thousands of houses were razed to the ground.

(1) Al-Qabas Newspaper (Kuwait), 9\11\2006.

- Breaking into the Palestinians' houses and destroying their furniture and contents, arresting the youth and spreading fear and horror in the hearts of women and children.
- The assassination of Palestinian activists via targeting their vehicles or motorbikes with missiles. This is the brutal way by which a large number of Palestinian activists, including Sheikh Ahmad Yasîn, 'Abdul-'Azîz Ar-Rantîsî and many others were assassinated.

Summary

The Muslim nation has currently become the target of global terrorists, who are holders of power in their countries. They fully exploit their military machineries, media capabilities and economic power to inflict the most brutal forms of violence and sacrilege against the bases of the Muslim nation, the nation that Allah, Glory be to Him, has honored with His Divine Message and entrusted with its propagation to humanity. It is the destiny of this nation to remain forever the combatant of the enemies of Allah, Glory be to Him, who says:

{"...And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e. His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might..."}

[Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 40]

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all Worlds.



Social Dimension of Violence



Dr. Shu`â` Hâshim Al-Yûsuf

Researcher and academic (Qatar)

Religions play the most important role in the life of the people. This is due to the fact that moderate religions are the most important factors that lead to a good, tranquil life, free from violence. Research shows that having deep belief in Allah, Exalted be He, and a strong relationship with Him are the most effective ways to eliminate the most serious causes of violence and extremism.

There are many causes behind the various forms of violence, including social problems that lead to psychological disorders and complexes. Such disorders cause people to resort to violence in their private and public lives. Discussing these causes and their negative effects requires a long detailed paper, or even a whole book, as social violence interrelates with a variety of other issues. However, the social problems that lead to violence can be summarized, in order of their importance, into the following four points:

First: Unemployment

Unemployment is undoubtedly one of the most important reasons behind the various forms of violence, especially after the failure of the projects and plans of development to provide sufficient employment opportunities. Additionally, the lack of cooperation between the official charity, civil and social organizations to fight against unemployment has led to an alarming increase in poverty as well as wealth; both causing juvenile delinquency. Moreover, social corruption has added to this problem, as it allowed some individuals to prosper at the expense of the poor. This has aroused a deep sense of injustice among the people and consequently driven them to use violence as a means of obtaining some of their usurped rights.

Second: Absence of peaceful dialogue, religious tolerance and a humane outlook

The absence of these factors has led to waves of religious fanaticism and racial discrimination, followed by waves of violence all over the world.

Third: Increase in divorce rates and domestic violence

There is a dramatic increase in divorce rates and domestic violence in the present time. This results in the breakup of families, and intellectual and psychological dysfunction, as well as possible physical dysfunction. Consequently, individuals withdraw from society, judge it harshly, and resort to secret organizations that support violence.

Fourth: Modern, accessible technology

Violence can be obtained and practiced through the several forms of modern technology that have become easily accessible. This technology has undoubtedly facilitated the ways and means to carry out various forms of violence, whether due to imitating others or intentionally planning to encourage such violence.

We will discuss each of these points separately, as follows:

Causes of Violence

First: Unemployment[1]

Unemployment is undoubtedly one of the most important reasons behind the various forms of violence, especially after the failure of the projects and plans of development to provide sufficient employment opportunities. Additionally, the lack of cooperation between the official charity, civil and social organizations in the fight against unemployment has led to an alarming increase in poverty as well as wealth; both causing juvenile delinquency. Moreover, social corruption has added to this problem, as it allowed some individuals to prosper at the expense of the poor. This has aroused a deep sense of injustice among the people and consequently driven them to use violence as a means of obtaining some of their usurped rights.

(1) For more information on this subject, please refer to the following references: Sayyid 'Uways, "No to Violence", a scientific study of the formation of the human conscience, (Dar Al-Hilâl (454), 1988; 'Aṭiyyah 'Âmir, "The Myth of the European Civilization" (The Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1990); Ian Craib, "The Modern Social Theory"; Joseph Camelry: The Crisis of Civilization, translated by: Fayṣal As-Sâmir (Baghdad: Ministry of Culture and Media, 1984).

Unemployment is one of the most serious problems that threaten the whole world. This problem continues to grow due to the increase in the world population on the one hand, and the dominance of machinery in all fields of work on the other hand. Thus, the youth are at a loss as to how to release their energy and achieve their goals. Unemployment emerges as the most significant reason for corruption due to the combination of too much unoccupied time and the strength and energy of the youth. Consequently, with the increased rates of unemployment all over the world, growth in violence is also expected. As the poet Aḫmad Shawqī[1] said:

Indeed, youth, free time and fortune
Lead to corruption, much corruption

Addiction and juvenile delinquency

Juvenile delinquency has increased worldwide for many reasons; some related to unemployment and some related to external factors, such as the environment of the young people and their economic level, the media and cinema, the spread of drugs, and other problems of modern civilization. These juvenile delinquents could be a victim of their families' misguidance. Accordingly, the causes of deviation can be divided into the following five points:

- Cognitive Deviation: It results from the ignorance of values of right and wrong.
- Peers' Imitational Deviation: It is known as conventional deviation, which refers to peers imitating one another.
- Lustful Deviation: It aims at realizing pleasure. The spread of modern technology contributes to this type of deviation.
- Obsessive Deviation: It is related to other values sought by the deviant.
- Moral Deviation; It is the most dangerous type of deviation through which the deviants believe that they can achieve power and supremacy.

(1) A great Egyptian poet.

It is important to illustrate the difference between juvenile deviation and delinquency. Deviation, or breaking the law, is a behavior which is unaccepted by society whereas delinquency means the violation of a rule or the intention to transgress. Sociologists define the delinquent's behavior according to its gravity, continuity, frequency and the presence of an attitude of aggression towards the society and its prevalent systems. Common acts of delinquency committed by juveniles include committing robbery, assaulting, fighting, breaking traffic laws, damaging other peoples' properties, running away from home or school, staying out late at night, making obscene phone calls, committing homosexuality, resorting to intoxicants, taking drugs as well as many other evils made available through modern technology, etc. Moreover, there are certain traits that distinguish delinquents from other individuals, such as mental disorders and hysterical behavior that are associated with a weak personality. Also, there are child delinquents who deviate before reaching puberty. Further, there are physically or mentally challenged delinquents who belong to low socio-economic environments; they represent a large percentage. Due to the lack of cultural, intellectual and interactive aspects of their lives, these delinquents are less able to deal with the surrounding stresses. However, their circumstances can improve through social training. They also need to be trained on how to deal with others, allowing them to react positively to appropriate changes in their surroundings. Their only problem could be that they have lost the ability to adapt to society.

The different means of media talk about the increased rate of juvenile delinquency. For example, an official statistical survey quoted from a study about Qatar (March 2000) showed that the number of delinquencies committed by juveniles in Qatar from 1994 to 1999 was 843 different cases: 386 delinquencies against public property, 184 delinquencies against human life, 132 moral and ethical delinquencies, 11 delinquencies involving chemical solvents, and 148 other unspecified cases. Regarding the employment status of such delinquents, they varied as follows: 720 delinquencies were committed by students, which were committed more than once by any one student during the same period. The survey registered only one delinquency per student, even if he was arrested several times.

These delinquencies took place throughout the period from 1994 to 1999 in the following ratio: 132 delinquencies in 1994, 120 in 1995, 12 in 1996, 123 in 1997, 89 in 1998, and 124 in 1999. Moreover, the study registered the nationalities of the delinquents as follows: 591 Qataris, 52 from the Gulf countries, 87 from various Arab states and 112 foreigners. A number of 4 delinquencies were committed by manual workers, 6 by soldiers and 113 by unemployed individuals. Thus, it is clear that the greatest percentage of delinquency is represented by the unemployed.

The culture of violence spread among the youth all over the world

Modern civilization has failed to refine human behavior. On the contrary, unemployment has played a role in decreasing the standards of refined behavior and ethics. There are many proofs of this, including the countless scenes of violence and cruelty broadcasted by satellite channels and the media, in addition to explicit sex scenes in drama series and movies which appeal to the young people of today and which is reinforced by alcohol and drug abuse. As a result, the young people may tend to apply such violent scenes in their entirety to real life, as is apparent in the terrible violence and group killings in many massacres committed worldwide.

The series of violence continues through the industry of war software targeting children and adolescents. Though these programs are games, apparently for entertainment, they plant and sustain the concepts of destruction, murder and annihilation in all its forms. Moreover, these games have removed the demarcation between reality and imagination, and illusion and reality, resulting in nervous and psychological disorders and a lack of concentration. This not only prevents individuals from being able to express their desires and actions, but it may cause them to harm themselves due to their confused state.

Watching violent scenes becomes a hobby for the young people and they see no harm in applying them to real life. While the West continues to design programs that glorify violence and facilitate it, the East is following suit, which has resulted in the spread of the culture of

violence all over the world. For example, on 8 July 1997, Dr. Muhammad Ar-Rumayhi presented alarming statistics that demonstrate violence in Kuwait. This drew the attention of writers and those concerned with the issue of violence to the real danger of the situation and prompted them to put forward various solutions. Noticeably, there are many examples of violence in our daily life, starting from rash, careless driving to daily behavior full of verbal and physical violence, which affects most societies nowadays. Such forms of violence should be uprooted and wiped out from their source.

According to statistics released in October 1999, in Christoph Nyke's book, "Stop Violence!", the rate of violence has witnessed a growing increase, as evidenced by the fact that almost half of the deaths recorded between 1989 and 1998 resulted from fights between young people. Also, Interpol statistics stated that 21% of the arrests made in 1999 were due to criminal delinquencies, compared to 13% in the early 1990s. Moreover, casualties have increased from 9 percent in 1990 to 15 percent in 1999. As for the victims of such incidents, they often belong to middle class families that do not have any problems, while the criminals belong to broken, dysfunctional or wealthy families.

Young people vary between tending to be violent and having familiar, moral standards, which leads to isolation or unrestrained extroversion on the part of those tending to be violent. To avoid this phenomenon, in 1998 the French authorities passed a decision to study the circumstances of the delinquencies committed by juveniles before the police were called and they were submitted to the law. Moreover, France prepared studied reform programs and assigned sociologists and researchers to address the problems of students before they became untreatable. Undoubtedly, the general state of young people does not help in developing balanced temperaments, and their easy access to technology without any censorship just makes it worse. Violence may start as verbal abuse then become physical with the aid of whatever one can lay hands on, starting from whips, i.e. traditional lethal weapons, to new, highly sophisticated weapons.

Second: The absence of peaceful dialogue, religious tolerance and a humane outlook[1]

This has led to waves of religious fanaticism and racial discrimination, followed by waves of violence all over the world. Violence is a weapon used by those who are unable to convince others, or by fanatics who want to force others to follow their vision and beliefs. Justifications for violence, such as provocation and the like, are not to be stated without a reason. Rather, law should be the only criterion to be followed by a civilized society. Also, political democracy should entail many sides when dealing with social issues, especially in light of the complex, fast-changing daily circumstances in the world.

The continued increase in the various forms of violence are attributable to two factors: First, the extreme sense of belonging to a party, cult or call, using it as a form of protection against the law; second, the intense belief that this sense of belonging carries the whole truth; this approach destroys the concept of scientific integrity that represents a basic element for investigation and examination. As a result, some groups emerge thinking that they have all the answers and solutions to everything! This is a form of extremism that is prohibited by the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, ethics and law.

To fight violence, we must first admit that mankind has many weaknesses and that there is no one who is perfect or without faults. Also, what is regarded as a social truth in one community may not be regarded as such in another. This is due to the fact that each community has its own history concerning the way it has striven to achieve what is in its interests.

(1) For more information about this topic please refer to the following: Yûsuf 'Awad, "Criticism of the Backward Mind: A Research on the Crisis of Cultural Existence for Those Whose Technological Ability Is Limited." (Beirut: Dar Al-Qalam, 1985); 'Alî Al-Wardî, "Human Nature" (Oman: Manshûrât Al-Ahliyyâ for Publication and Distribution, 1996); Edward De Bono, "Conflicts"; Muhammad Munîr Sa'd Ad-Dîn, "Media: Readings about Modern and Islamic Media" (Beirut: Dar Beirut Al-Mahrûsâ for Printing and Publication 1991).

Intrinsically, the problem may be a cultural one, and no party has the right to use it to condemn another party for any political or religious reasons. This is contrary to the view that religious fanaticism is the best solution for all the problems of humankind; a view that spreads hatred among religions, and even among different sects within the same religion. Thus, important lessons should be learnt from others' experiences. If one is not attentive enough, one may be deceived into being short-sighted, self-centered, and impatient. Everyone should stick to human ideals, social values and benevolent behavior. To honestly admit the defects in our society is a first step to ensure that social uprightness will not become a mere, superficial value. For many years, violence was not studied or dealt with correctly, and was left to the ebb and flow of society till it was aggravated and turned from incidental flare-ups into fanaticism, which ultimately caters for terrorism.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a deep-rooted social phenomenon that is not limited to the modern age. It can be defined as the destruction of public property and aggression against the lives of innocent civilians. Not everything claimed to be terrorism by the world-wide media is actually an act of terrorism. It is a widespread fashion of the 21st century that accusations of terrorism are used against others for political, economic and religious reasons. This attitude by itself is a form of terrorism.

Real terrorism is the paramount product of ideological extremism. Ideological terrorism has found a fertile ground among some social groups, as a result of its being disguised as a religious revival and a return to Allah. In fact, although the concept of revival can be applied to some parts of the Islamic world, it cannot be applicable to the Arabian Peninsula. Over history, there has been no evidence that apostasy from Islam, nonobservance of Islamic obligations or the practice of major sins on a large-scale has constituted a phenomenon in the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, the claims of a revival in this region lack even the slightest evidence.

One of the most important causes of ideological terrorism is adopting only one opinion and condemning other opposing opinions, regardless of their soundness, and not discerning any difference between discussion and quarrel. A good example of ideological pluralism is when Imâm Abû Hanîfah introduced the concept of *Ahlur-Ra'y* (i.e. the People of the *Shar'î* Opinion)[1], although he was a venerable Imâm known among other Imâms for his wide knowledge and excellent righteousness.

It is also important to note that the attempts to separate the *Shar'î* sciences from other sciences was an aim of the colonial states, in order to create generations with conflicting secular and fundamentalist attitudes. To avoid this, the Islamic universities should establish faculties that provide natural, applied and social sciences alongside the Islamic *Sharî'ah*.

After all, we all are children of Adam and Adam was created from dust. The virtues of modesty and tolerance should be widespread among the people as a whole. This concept was summarized successfully in an article titled: "The Virtue of Religious Tolerance" by Khâlis Jalbî, published in the "Asharq Al Awsat", 23/1/2004[2].

(1) A doctrine that a Muslim layperson can rely on the opinions of any of the great Muslim scholars, and need not necessarily follow just one of them.

(2) Asharq Al Awsat (23/1/2004): "In 1649, King Charles I was beheaded and a Republic was established in Britain at the hands of Cromwell. His most important achievement was to pave the way for constitutional monarchy and 'religious tolerance'. He allowed the Jews to return to Britain after three centuries of exile. Surely, Cromwell himself is past history now, but the point is that constitutional monarchy was brought into existence and absolute rule was ended. Cromwell's work was influenced by a famous philosopher, John Locke, who had fled to Holland, escaping from religious persecution. Will Durant, the historian, reported that when Locke returned to Britain in 1689, during the reign of William III, he was sixty years old. In one year, 'the Year of Wonder', he had 3 books published, which made him a highly prominent thinker in history. In the first book, titled 'Two Treatises on the Government', he rejected the divine rights of monarchs and introduced the *Separation of Powers* theory, setting out the principles of political democracy. The other two books are *'A Letter Concerning Tolerance'* and *'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding'*. Just as his friend Newton analyzed light, Locke analyzed the human psyche and politics. Regarding religious toleration, Locke maintained that toleration must extend to people of different religions, not only the people of the same religion: "Neither Pagan, Mahometan nor Jew ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion." =

= His revolutionary ideas influenced the breakout of the French Revolution and the approval of the Declaration of Human Rights. As far as South America, Simon Bolivar was influenced by Locke's ideas, liberating five countries (Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru) in the period 1819-1825 from Spanish occupation. Locke had very remarkable effects on the European enlightenment and religious tolerance. By virtue of his ideas, Kant published his book *'Perpetual Peace'*, and humanism, introduced by Erasmus of Rotterdam, attracted many. The worst catastrophe that can afflict thought is austerity, since it goes in opposition to the laws of nature, which are based on a balance. For example, any excessive increase or decrease in the rate of potassium in the bloodstream can cause heart failure due to relaxation or contraction of the heart muscle; any increase in the rate of copper in the body may cause Wilson's disease of the liver. By the same token, electricity is useful when used to operate elevators, but lethal when contained in lightning. The best state of energy is not to freeze nor explode. Water is useful when collected behind a dam, but destructive if it runs as floods. The body muscles are not always strained; they alternate between relaxation and contraction. The process of giving birth involves relaxation and contraction. Further, fear of scorpions is necessary to protect oneself from them, but excessive fear may lead to phobia. The Chinese philosophy is based on an alternation between negativism and positivism (termed 'yin and yang'). The best thing for a society is justice, and the best condition for someone is a state of well-being with a balance of emotions and drives. Under these notions, philosophers formulated the Golden Mean. In Aristotle's words, any virtue is the middle between two evils. For example, courage is a middle point between fear and light-headedness, as is generosity between stinginess and extravagance. Dualism is wrong, and this is not a black-and-white world. This applies also to religiosity. Again, austerity is in conflict with the rules of life, and it destroys itself and those in contact with it. Religiosity is like the salts and hormones of the body; just as food loses its taste without salt, an irreligious life is like a meaningless machine. As far as salt is essential for the body, excessive amounts of it can be harmful. This is the paradox of religiosity and fanaticism. A reasonable degree of religiosity, combined with awareness, can give life sense and disseminate leniency and love. On the other hand, if religiosity is too much (so, for example, the essence of the religion is ignored, one becomes affectedly pious (showing-off) or there is an imbalance between the different obligations), awareness would turn to fanaticism, and life would become sheer hell. There would emerge a kind of anti-life, unreligious religiosity. The whole society would become an open psychiatric hospital. These are the cases of the extremes of matters, while their (golden) means are absent. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And there is not a thing but with Us are the depositories thereof. And We do not send it down except according to a known (i.e. specified) measure."}

[Al-Hijr (Thamûd's Habitation): 21]

Accusations of disbelief have become a widespread phenomenon, in which a party deems another one to be deprived of Allah's Mercy. This is a result of an 'illusion' that one has the utmost, absolute truth, which implies two calamities: A self-centered attitude and a one-track mentality. =

Third: Increase of divorce rates and family violence(1)

Nowadays, there is a dramatic increase in divorce rates and family violence. This results in family breakups, psychological problems and possibly homelessness. In such a situation, youths can develop negative attitudes towards the whole society, leading them to be violent against it.

Family violence involves all forms of psychologically negative relations among family members, including verbal abuse, violent behavior, physical aggression, and even unintentional or intentional murder. A medical study, published in November 2002, showed that world annual sedative sales have increased by almost double since 1988, and that most of the consumers among the youth are female. This study indicates that there is a global state of psychological unrest. Psychiatric patients represent 7.5 percent of all the

= Religiosity can be insane or reasonable, depending on what extent it is connected to awareness or fanaticism. There may appear versions of Islam that are against Islam itself and sorts of religiosity that are against life. Any kind of energy (water, electricity, emotions, etc.) has 3 possibilities: Restrained, controlled or released. For example, water stagnates and creates dirty swamps if it is restricted; it generates electricity and irrigates farms and gardens when used reasonably; and it becomes a destructive flood if it runs haphazardly and uncontrollably. By the same token, electricity can be destructive in the form of lightning or useful when kept in wires. Sexual desires can create obsession when suppressed, promiscuity when practiced permissively, and a happy family when regulated. Spiritual attitudes can create terrorists if not refined by religion, or produce highly civilized cultures if well-guided. A little amount of salt makes food delicious, while a handful of it makes it unpleasant. All these are energies governed by the Divine laws which organize the universe. Surely, security agencies can stop terrorism for some time, but they work like aspirin which kills pain temporarily, leading one to think that the microbes have been destroyed while they are, in reality, growing actively. Unless the mentality of terrorism is annihilated, it will erupt over and over again with more violence and destruction. The American strategy in their war against terrorism is an imitation of the story of Alexander the Great and the pirate; while the latter assaulted people with a ship, Alexander attacked whole countries with his fleet."

(1) For more information, See: Su`âd `Abduallah An-Nâṣir, "The Women's Cause: A Substantial View", Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Research and Studies Center, Doha, Qatar, Kitâb Al-Ummah (97), 2003; `Alî Amîn Al-Mazrû`î, "Islamic vs. Western Values", World Studies Series, Emirates Strategic Research and Studies Center (21), 1999; Muḥammad `Imâd Ad-Dîn Ismâ`îl, "Children are the Reflection of Society", `Âlam Al-Ma`rifah (99), Kuwait, 1986; and `Abdul-Laṭif Muḥammad Khalîfah, "Loftiness of Values (A Psychological Study)", `Âlam Al-Ma`rifah (160), 1992.

medical cases in the world and 70 percent of female patients are between 15-44 years of age. Psychotherapists state that most of their patients have begun to ask openly for treatment without fear, suppression of their feelings or reticence of their anxieties and depression.

A British study, published in May 2000, revealed that 40 percent of British women were obsessed with suicide, and that they could only sleep by using sedatives. Interestingly, most of the cases had a high socioeconomic level of living. The reasons ranged from failure at work, with love or marriage relationships or family problems. The study confirmed that women's work may not be good for them.

Many reports, studies and books have been released addressing family violence, discussing its causes and solutions. Here are the main causes of the problem:

- **International Energy Crisis:** The world's economic changes have created many national problems such as increased national debt, poverty and unemployment. These factors have heavily affected the financial status of families, which has generated daily quarrels and violent incidents.
- **International Security Crisis:** Large-size trade of weapons, terrorism and on-line malicious thoughts have attracted more attention than family crimes, whose rates have consequently increased.
- **Media Problems:** These include disrespect of privacy, fabrication of news and other devious practices which have made distrust prevalent among the people. Further, the cultural invasion of Muslim countries has facilitated the dissemination of Western values and undesirable behavior among the youths.
- **Parental addiction to modern technology:** Many parents today do not look after their children enough because they are too interested in trivial preoccupations; e.g. they spend time talking on the phone, watching TV, using the Internet, etc. Children of such parents do not receive enough care, and so they will be subject to undesirable influences and most likely to become delinquents.

Moreover, parental absence for long times has negative effects on the family relations as well as the traits and behavior of the children. Research indicates that one of the most important reasons for delinquency is the family itself. Rejection, discrimination, overprotection, unpleasant childhood experiences and deprivation, all are possible reasons for future delinquency.

Also, the modern trend for women to work and be independent actually affects their basic role of taking care of their families. When women are burdened with more responsibilities, they will be unable to pay due attention to their children. Further, they share job opportunities with men, which makes the problem of unemployment even worse.

At present, women constitute more than 50 percent of the work force in most countries, and they obtained full rights in more than 130 countries all over the world. Time will show how such a state will lead to disastrous results in these countries. For example, a recent governmental report in Bahrain (which is a third-world country) showed that about 70 percent of the work force in the state's ministries and institutions are women! At the same time, men suffer from unemployment, which has increased crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse. Betty Freidan (a US writer) described the modern relationship between men and women as "the policy of hatred". Being a feminist, in her book "Beyond Gender", published in 1998, she discussed how feminism became a movement against the interests of the public and destroyed national unity. She demanded a new vision to support the family and reestablish an integrated, consolidated society, represented by a housewife who is devoted to her duties towards her family and not relying on modern technology or paid nursemaids.

However, some women today firmly believe in the new feminist trends and consider their family responsibilities as old-fashioned. The American Association for Working Women examined women's roles over the last century in terms of rights, statistics and health. The report was presented in the Doha Conference, 2004. The report revealed an alarming increase in divorce rates in developing countries, which resulted in various problems of violence. Undoubtedly, divorce affects children so badly that they may choose delinquency as an expression of the feelings of indignation,

depression and inferiority. These results may drive the whole of society to deterioration, disintegration and, eventually, ruin. Actually, these delinquents are victims of irresponsible parents and of society itself, which did not enforce effective laws that ensure an honorable and stable quality of life within the family and protect new generations from unpleasant fates.

In the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, divorce rates are constantly increasing. For example, the number of family legal actions is as much as 60 percent of the total cases examined by courts in Saudi Arabia. In Jeddah, divorce rate in 2005 stood at 45 percent, most of which occurred in the first year of marriage. This is attributable to the unawareness of the requirements of marriage and lack of preparation before marriage, through social and religious courses. These courses and lectures should be the main focus of parents rather than such secondary concerns as wedding arrangements, providing a house and luxurious car.

To solve these problems, some regulations have been implemented; e.g. no family legal case should be filed unless it is first examined by a reconciliation office, which coordinates with competent courts and authorities on divorce lawsuits. The two litigants should have interviews with psychological, social and *Shar'ī* experts to try to reach a compromise. Then, the conditions which are agreed upon are registered and referred to the relevant authority.

Most divorces have similar causes, such as the wrong selection of the spouse, ignorance of marriage requirements and bad treatment.

Sexual Violence against Women

Females, in particular, are subject to sexual violence due to their physical vulnerability as compared to males. Reports show that one out of four women around the world has been subjected to sexual violence. These statistics should be proved and processed, since they have very serious implications. The latest statistics on violence against women, included in the World Health Organization's report in October 2002, discussed all kinds of violence, especially family violence between spouses. Based on studies in Australia, Canada, South Africa and the USA, the report revealed that

40-70 percent of women were victims of violence and were abused by their husbands. Studies also indicated that 37 percent of women were subjected to sexual abuse during their first sexual intercourse. Additionally, 10-20 percent of the respondents from 48 countries in the period 1999-2001 reported that they were victims of sexual violence from their husbands at some point in their lives.

Violence against women is found equally in different parts of the world, both in rich and poor countries, among all religious and social backgrounds.

Perhaps the most important cause of violence is stress of modern life that affects all family members on an equal basis, in which stress is released at the expense of the most vulnerable family members. Also, absence of constructive dialogue and logical methods to solve problems may worsen the results of family violence. Studies reveal that the future spouses should learn how to solve their problems. For this reason, there are academic university courses that deal with family problems. Youths of both sexes should be encouraged to attend these courses.

Fourth: Modern technology and easy access to it

Violence can be disseminated by modern technology, which has become readily available. Technology has facilitated ways to practice social violence, whether by blind imitating it or purposefully intending to be violent. The values of globalization have contaminated individual privacy due to different means of media, such as satellite channels and the Internet. Drug abuse and HIV infections have become familiar features of the post-modern world. Smoking and use of alcohol have become more prevalent than ever. By virtue of modern technology, these substances have become cheaper and more easily obtained.

In this respect, the WHO's 2002 October report revealed that 1.6 million persons around the world die annually in violent ways, and half of them commit suicide using modern techniques. The report also showed that more than 60 percent of suicides are committed by males, constituting the fourth most common cause of death for 15-44 year-olds. The study included 70 countries. The report revealed that war

is accountable for just one fifth of these deaths, while murder crimes are accountable for about one third of mortality rates. This includes sexual abuse against children, violence against old people and other forms of individual or group violence. Finally, the report showed that 1,424 persons all over the world die everyday because of murder crimes (about 1 person per minute).

Some modern technologies and how they increase violence are discussed below.

1. Media Technologies

Media technology has helped brainwash the public, both individually and collectively. There are even exhaustive studies on how to change individual behavior! Undoubtedly, modern technology has helped develop enslaved individuals (whether male or female, young or old) who are influenced by the market requirements and the mainstream technological propaganda, even if it advocates violence. Radio and TV advertisements are just electronic devices to control individual behavior. Actually, all these practices are violations against individual mentality, personal freedom and even social and religious norms. Violence-oriented stereotyping is easily and successfully carried out by spreading poisonous thoughts in the media. The media is used to promote total globalization, and individual life and mentality have been invaded. Now, there is no such thing as an intellectually autonomous person.

2. The Internet

The societies that depend highly on the Internet as a source of information are liable to many dangers. They need to carry out great efforts to enforce strict regulations concerning the Internet community. In principle, the Internet is developed to serve humankind and facilitate communication among people, not to be a cause of societal deterioration. Practically, it is very difficult to analyze the morally adverse results and violent disorders that threaten the "cybercafé" societies. In the light of the steady and rapid technological progress, most of the modern inventions

are kept secret by their developers, making it difficult to take necessary procedures to protect the general public from any risks. No control can be imposed on the Internet, and it is even difficult to censor it because of the worldwide nature of the system. Specialists unanimously maintain that the Internet is a double-edged invention; as far as it is effective in securing instant communication and removing physical boundaries, it can be particularly harmful in the third-world countries where telecommunications technology is likely to be overly "sensitive" for their culture.

Different forms of violence can be learnt via the World Wide Web, from blind imitation of undesirable ideologies to learning how to make bombs. Dangers of adverse use of the Internet increase in the absence of control over the internet service providers by official agencies.

Just as the law stipulates penalties for fraud and criminal activities, the use of the Internet should be regulated through a censorship system to prevent offensive or dangerous online material. Who is in charge of the Internet? What constitutes an offence? Is it the fault of the source of violent information, the Internet provider or the user?

Legally, the provider is to be held liable, since it probably has authority in the targeted countries, even though the unlawful material comes from abroad. To prevent indecent online content, legislation should be enforced to protect online rights in conformity with general values and norms. Any Web site which is harmful for people should be banned. The relevant official authorities should put limitations on the free use of the Internet so that it is used only for useful, morally acceptable purposes.

Internet-Caused Social Problems

Perhaps the commonest Internet-related social problems are youth dating, access to private information and propagation of malicious ideas.

Internet Addiction

In the last two decades, the PC and the informatics field have successfully become a very important and popular economic sector, creating a state of "online mania", so to speak. Health experts discussed this point in the

CEBIT International Computer Fair, Hanover, Germany in March 2003. The Center for Addiction estimated that there were more than 1,000,000 Internet addicts in Germany. This morbid case involves spending long hours in front of the PC until late at night, which affects productivity and causes stress that, in turn, can lead to violence.

All types of addiction (alcoholic drug, gambling and the Internet) share a common factor; that is, lack of self-control and carelessness about one's personal status and social environment. This may happen to the depressed employees, housewives and unemployed from all social groups. Internet addiction seems the most dangerous, since the excessive use of the Internet does not seem objectionable; it may even be desirable at first. Alcohol and drug abuse affect the body negatively, and gambling addiction affects one's personal income. Internet addiction, however, may not have tangible effects, making the problem even worse. Thus, it is necessary to use onscreen warning panels that appear if a user exceeds a specified time, telling him: "Attention! You have been using the Internet for too long!"

3. Satellite Channels

It is no longer believed that TV programs are aimed mainly at entertainment. Rather dangerously, they are used to restructure societies, influence public opinion and introduce new social patterns. This is particularly dangerous among children and youths. Concerning this important topic, 3 points can be observed:

(a) The quality of satellite and online programs for children

(b) The social effects of the programs on children

(c) How TV programs negatively affect the behavior and beliefs of children

TV programs for children can be categorized into short and long cartoons, dubbed cartoon serials, scientific and educational programs, funny songs and amusing competitions. Undoubtedly, children are influenced by the TV material presented to them. Television has become the child's best friend to the extent that it is sometimes called the "third parent"! Although

television has many disadvantages, it does have its own advantages. Thanks to it, children can know about many subjects without much reading. The audiovisual message is communicated more easily and effectively than by reading. So, television is now used as an educational aid.

The negative social effects of TV programs on children include the premature imitation of adult life, with its violent and permissive nature. This way, wrong perceptions are internalized by children; a gap is created between their mentality and the general culture, and consumption increases. Other disadvantages are a weak ability to socialize, lack of sports activities and watching too much TV. To overcome such problems, some solutions can be proposed.

- Do not let children watch TV liberally. Instead, determine a specific number of hours for watching TV and specific programs to be watched.
- Parental control should be practiced during the "TV time". Talk to children about what they are watching and tell them what is good and what is bad in the content of the programs.
- Educate children to watch critically, provide opportunities to make the television a helper of cognitive development and monitor their exposure to TV commercials.
- Demand that the officials of TV stations respect young audiences as important members of society.
- The Arab media should work out a strategy to become an advanced system that carries out its responsibility of shaping the mentalities of the young. It should be oriented to the Arab family and child in the current era of globalization. Further, such a media mission should be carried out by large media institutions that have high-tech capabilities and reliable media material.
- Rather than being receivers of the Western media materials for children, we should produce our own media materials which are based on our own culture. We should also develop our own media technologies to compete in quality with the West.

Computer Games

Computer may be the proper present to limit your child's over-activity. You do not have to help him make the choice. He has already made the choice thanks to the knowledge he obtained from his experienced colleagues in school. You need only to connect the computer with your TV, then, your child will be busier. But you will not be able to enjoy TV programs without going through series of conflicts. In such a case, you may think of buying a new color TV for him. However, you will not have a peace of mind because you will be occupied by solving the conflict between your children if you have not got more than one computer. Thus, you may think you are the only winner as you are released from being disturbed by your children by making them busy with the computer. But this is a wrong belief, as you will discover that what you have done is nothing but a mistake against your children's better interests.

On the one hand, computer games have some advantages, including practicing quick reactions, doing the right acts at the proper time and increasing accuracy of observation. Also, most of these games provide the players with extra information, especially if they are originally designed as educational games. Furthermore, some American institutions even found that computer games can be designed in a particular way to help in training children who suffer difficulty in reading. In addition, research at NASA proved that computer games can be used in treating the hyperactive children to extend their span of attention and concentration.

On the other hand, computer games involve many risks, as most of them focus on bloody, horrible fighting. Thus, the game that may release you from boredom is a game where the player beats his rival harshly and tears his body apart, then cuts his head and catches it in his hand, announcing his victory over his rival. Moreover, the game may consist of driving cars or flying planes that cause vast destruction and throw fiery balls that kill victims randomly. Hence, it can be said that the ideas of September 11 attacks may have been inspired by a successful computer game. Is your excuse a plea that there is no harm in it since all children play this game? But these children incline to be excessively violent. Will you leave your child to be involved in his destructive games without monitoring him?!

You may hear of a game called Street Fighters. It is the most popular game on computer devices. You can easily notice how your child's face changes while he plays this game, starting, with total concentration to shoot as many deadly blows as possible at his supposed enemy, moving his hands and fingers nervously on the joystick, and overwhelmed with happiness when he manages to "murder" his rival. Several minutes full of violence and feelings of cruelty and murder triggered in the mind of a child that can be described as innocent; however, the games we use to amuse him are far removed from being innocent.

Once they are back home, some children rush to their rooms to complete yesterday's game or to try a new one they got from their friends. The more bloody the game, the more interesting they find it. When children grow, with these games in their lives, they may prefer isolation and suffer from inferior educational attainments or even total lack of them and suffer from physical weakness, especially if these violent games are accompanied with unhealthy fast foods. Also, it is obvious that stuttering and other psychological effects spread among these children.

Unfortunately, parents cannot easily treat these bad effects, as they do not know exactly what happened to their children whom they did not deprive of anything, especially computer games. They do not know that the effects planted in their children now may appear later in what is called "normalization of murder". These games will later justify every bad and harmful deed. Researches indicate that the unconsciousness of children under the age of 7 years retains effects of violence more than that of older children. The solution is not keeping children away from these games, but finding other useful computer games. Moreover, the type and source of the games can be defined and controlled. Then, we should set a time limit for playing and encourage children to practice various sports and social activities.

Pornographic sites are, in particular, very dangerous for children unless they are protected against them by international filtration. In this regard, the US government agreed on two proposals to limit access to such sites. The first proposal is to prohibit the creation of any commercial sites on the Internet for publishing and distributing pornographic materials. The second proposal is to distribute filtration programs to schools and libraries that could possibly be connected to pornographic internet sites.

In this regard, we should mention that there are some advantages for children in using the Internet. For example, they learn how to express themselves frankly and become more open to the world and more tolerant towards ethnic and cultural differences. Also, the Internet helps provide social care for adolescents, disabled persons and those who suffer form psychological and behavioral disorders. Furthermore, some sites focus on the Services Sector, where an ill child can enjoy internet services that are related to employment, banks and marketing via the net, and other services that are increasing rapidly today.

Perhaps Sawsan Al-Abṯaẖ's article, published on 26\11\2002 in Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat journal, is the most prominent piece of writing about the risks of modern technologies to children[(1)].

(1) The writer says, "Childhood is not living in glory, as some optimists claim, who envy children because of the present day booby-trapped gifts presented by satellite or technological tools. Undoubtedly, Disney Land, with its joys, cartoons and entertainment in huge commercial centers, is the cheerful front that hides the traps set for the child's curiosity in order to exploit him by the best technical and attractive ways. Psychologists have predicted, since 1900, that the 20th century will witness a great revolution that will shape a new concept for childhood. A century later, this wave reached a level that was never expected, since whatever exceeds a normal limit turns to have opposite effects. All studies about TV, technological games, the internet and cinema show that childhood is actually being stolen, and children are exposed to psychological constraint and brainwashing according to the interests of one company or another. Apart from violence and sex, advertisements, alone, are able to trigger an earthquake. For example, the French child watches 3000 ads annually, while the American child watches up to 30,000 ads every year according to the consumer union there. No one has an idea about the number of ads the Arab child watches. Sweden has determined to prevent advertisements in broadcast periods directed to children. The reason is that children, under age 12, cannot distinguish between ads and documentary programs, or even between fiction and reality. But the success rate for this measure was limited as other surveys showed that 75 percent of the materials children watch are originally directed to adults. Children's minds are alert, so they can understand whatever is directed to them or to others. So, work is in progress in the European countries to alleviate stress on children before being destroyed by scenes of treason, murder, distortion and pursuit between good and evil. It came out that 80 percent of American movies shown in France involve scenes of seduction and convey a message to the effect: "to win, you have to destroy the others". This is entirely contrary to the familiar educational tradition of the country to persuade children that: "who resorts to violence to resolve his problems needs a treatment to resolve his complex". Thus, these concepts are extremely contradictory. In addition, if we take into consideration =

5. Mobile phones and their direct role in family disunity

In our era, mobiles reduce both long and short distances. A person may stay in his room while speaking to his brother in the next room with a mobile phone. Thus, the intimate relations among the family's members are interrupted and amicable ties are replaced by screaming and quarrelling over who will pay the expensive bills of the phone. From a different perspective, a recent study revealed that messages sent through mobile phones have added a new cause to the list of causes of violence and divorce in the UAE, which, as it is, faces increased rates of divorce among its citizen. The Family Guidance Department in Dubai, which undertakes the duty of reconciliation among spouses, has studied many marital conflicts that led to divorce as a result of mobile phone messages.

Examples of the above-mentioned cases include that of a husband who read a normal message sent to his wife's mobile, as a joke, by her director at work. As a result he swore that this message will put an end to their six year marriage which had blessed them with innocent children. The Family Guide in Dubai's courts stated that one never expected that mobile phone messages would become a major cause of divorce. But the large number of cases which Family Guidance Department deals with show that we are facing a phenomenon that should be examined and warned against. That is because wives begin, after reading the messages, to call the sender of the message, which reveals to them facts they never expected. It is worth mentioning that a study by UAE Ministry

= that French children watch TV for 1000 hours per year - which is equivalent to the time they spend at school and most probably Arab figures are not far from this rate - the question will be: who will triumph in the battle between the teacher with his decreasing capabilities and the producer with his highly developed potential? This is especially the case when parents seem to be anesthetized and more affected by the ordeal than their children as well as being more attracted by series, movies, games and advertising. Thus, if a parent wants to punish his child, he threatens him: "if you do not study your lessons, you will not watch TV". Thus, the screen, with the illusive effects it provides, becomes in the unconsciousness "a reward that the diligent deserves". What a reward! The worst is that TV addicts are themselves internet addicts who escape from one trap only to fall into another. Since the issue is so serious, we must work to contain and refine whatever is shown on the screen."

of Labor and Social Affairs in 2002 showed that modern technologies, especially the internet, have become one of the major causes of divorce in the Emirates. Hence, the husband has become distracted from his family while the wife thinks that her husband is having affairs with other women who may be thousands of miles away in another country or with a man who claims to be a woman.

Modern technologies as an educational means of inculcating methods of torture

Methods of torture that have developed from modern technologies have aroused a wave of anxiety because of their inconsistency with human rights concerning respect for people and privacy of personal life. Moreover, there is a clear violation of individual freedom by intellectual and physical observation using audiovisual bugging devices and surveillance of personal information. Modern technologies have facilitated placing innocent souls under the mercy of plots and schemes executed without justice or pity. A matter that makes the innocent subject to ruin and murder, and at best to starvation, humiliation, or even to robbery, rape, assault and exile. These technologies did not alleviate the atrocities of war, on the contrary, they increased its disasters. It is very clear that recent wars have caused the death of millions of innocent souls and destroyed the natural wealth and graces with which Allah, Exalted be He, has generously provided mankind.[1]

1 For more details check the following references: Barakât Muhammad Murâd: The Phenomenon of Globalization (A Critical View), Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Research and Study Center, Doha-Qatar, Kitâb Al-Ummah (86) (2001); Shua'â' Hâshim Al-Yûsuf, Modern Technologies (Advantages and Disadvantages), Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Research and Study Center, Doha-Qatar, Kitâb Al-Ummah (112) (2006); Shawqi Abû Shu'ayrah, Suicide of Civilization: Chaos of the 21th Century, Cairo: Al-Ahâlî Distribution and Publication (1994); UNRISD, Chaos and Social Effect of Globalization, translated by 'Umrân Abû Hajlah, Arab Institution for Publication and Distribution (1997); A Selection of Researchers and Writers, The Muslim's Message in The Globalization Era, Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Research and Study Center, Doha-Qatar (2003); Shua'â' Hâshim, Civilization of the Modern Age, A Reality from a Different Prospective, National Council, , Doha-Qatar (2002).

Treatment of Violence

Treatment of social violence includes:

First: Social Treatment

Some treatments for violence can be presented as follows:

1. Civil institutions may have tried to take various roles in facing social problems that result in violence, but they have so far failed to present proper solutions that can entirely eradicate violence. Thus, they should work more efficiently in order to confront such a serious disease. Undoubtedly, state institutions should play the greatest role by taking part in restricting violence-stimulating technologies. Technological progress is not meant to facilitate access to technologies regardless of social and national values; rather, supervision and continuous guidance are necessary.
2. The media is accused of creating dependent and confused minds that are torn between tradition and globalization. Thus, various media channels must play an effective role in fighting violence. Furthermore, faculties of media studies can undertake such a role and organize many researches and studies to find competent officials in the media sphere who are capable of fighting moral and religious decadence. Islamic websites as well as Islamic satellite channels can serve as a beacon for vivid thought and elevate the spiritual aspect of life according to the spirit of the era. Undoubtedly, some programs on Islamic channels are in need of elaborate and precise studies before they are released. In this regard, they should develop their religious contents to fit the new conditions. At the same time, consideration of the cultural aspect is of great importance because these channels cover societies that have no idea about Islam and even societies that are surrounded by dozens of conceptually antireligious or secular channels, at best. Also, we may find that the religious tendency in some multicultural channels is very weak. So, it is better to focus on religiousness as a spiritual and valuable alternative for

the treatment of the moral deviation that is still being produced by Western civilization. This deviation destroys thousands of juveniles every year by means of suicide, drug addiction, violence or moral crimes. Accordingly, scholars, psychologists and educators should be responsible to constantly develop beliefs as well as use modern media methods to develop the young and educate contemporary generations. Surely, the satisfaction of biological and libidinal desires in the absence of religious values will lead individuals to peril and states of collapse.

3. There is no doubt that the family, school and society have positive roles in combating violence. We may focus on the role women can play (as mothers, sisters, wives and teachers) because, in the Islamic world, they have entered the sphere of science and knowledge and have come to possess a distinctive cultural presence in society. Before looking into woman's problems as spinsterhood and divorce, women's movements in the Islamic states should generate new tendencies to study problems resulting from woman's work, which has become the fashion of the age to the extent that most women pursue jobs without considering the numerous negative consequences. One of the most dangerous negative aspects of women's employment is the great dependence on servants and technologies that affect the psychological and physical health of family members and represent an important factor in spreading violence. The time has come for women's movements all over the world to wake up to carry out serious studies and research about the effects of woman's work on education and the health of juveniles and family stability. Moreover, we should focus on the phenomenon of using the services of servants and babysitters, and investigate the effects technology has on our children as well as its effects on the increased rates of divorce and emergence of incurable diseases of violence.

Moreover, women's activists should pause to think of this point since making use of the experience in dealing with women's issues of nations that preceded them is an important task, especially when we know that these nations are suffering severely at present. More than 100 years later, Ameri-

can Feminism, despite the great significance of the presence of American women in the labor market, has not only ceased to encourage working women, but it is also working hard to come to grips with the negative social, health and educational effects of woman's work on raising generations or competing with and spreading unemployment among men due to the employment of woman and depending on technologies. Some pioneers of American Feminism have written books opposed to woman's work. For example, Deborah Fallows, author of "A Mother's Work", has resigned as the chief of an American university and devoted herself to raise her children. Also, Jean Roth Schroedel, a writer, wrote a book titled "Alone in a Crowd: Women in the Trade Tell their Stories" in which she explains the experience of women's work with men and how they are exposed to harassment and embarrassment in addition to the burden of home management and the raising of children. This was explained in detail in a book called "The Third Sex" by Patricia A. McBroom who asserted that working women have acquired a great number of ideas about masculinity and aggression. Thus a third sex has appeared in our modern civilization in the shape of a woman whose behavior and moods are mixed with those of man.

On this occasion, it may be helpful to refer to the book "The myth of Women's Liberation in America" by the American writer, Sylvia Hewlett, in which she reviewed many studies on women's work and came to a decisive result that it is impossible to find proper conditions to strike a balance between raising children properly and performing work seriously outside the home. This is as well as the serious harm resulting from using fast technologies in cooking, cleaning and so on.

We have another example, political science professor, Andrew Hacker, in Queen's City College in New York, has published an article, in issue number 77 of 'Woman' Magazine. This article was supported by clear evidence by the American society's back tracking concerning the support of women's work. The reason is that the negative aspects of such work outweigh its positive sides, especially in issues relating to motherhood and women's health, in addition to some health, economic, political and educational problems that proved that women's work involves risks.

Later, many books that deal with these problems have been issued. Among these problems are rights that women acquired at the expense of men, who usually lose labor opportunities (as secretaries, for example), bringing about hatred and hateful competition between men and women. Thus, the role of women's movements in Islamic countries is to act against women's work, when they do not work out of necessity, only seeking after their claimed freedom and equality.

Second: Practical Solutions

The most important practical solutions to limit violence include:

Reinforcing creativity

Creative requirements of the nation should be based on a balance between requirements of the mind and those of the soul and body. The nation's circumstances will never change unless it rejects the idea of accepting idleness. Creativity, in the full sense of the word, implies a distinctive industry for investing ideas of science, religion, society and shaping them for the benefit of mankind. But, is creativity a natural instinct or is it an acquired one?

The answer: it is easy to develop creativity in people according to their capabilities, starting from writing to developing simple invention skills which do not harm the environment. This may require us to train children early to discover the environment around them, then give them the chance to discover the beauty of the whole world. There can be no doubt that family, school, society and media participate in developing creative minds. Some centers specializing in developing creativity can be established to truly satisfy all hobbies and talents in an understandable way as well as reinforcing human will power and determination.

Furthermore, creativity requires development. Just as species of animals died out as a result of their inability to develop or to acclimatize to new natural sources, nations may creatively die out for the same reason, unless they are developed and renewed by new generations. In this regard, we present some suggestions on how to exploit time to create useful and interesting activities:

1. Developing weaving, tailoring and dressmaking, and other skills.
2. Attending courses involving all types of pottery.
3. Developing skills needed for photography, calligraphy and making ornaments.
4. Participating in arts involving Islamic songs, acting and the suchlike.
5. Taking part in graphic arts using various mediums, especially by using modern technology.
6. Constantly showing entertaining, scientific and educational movies in various fields.
7. Attending computer courses.
8. Attending courses in various sports.
9. Receiving training about modern devices of civil defense and first aid.
10. Receiving training about healthy cooking and the elaborate presentation of dishes.
11. Focusing on special hobbies such as collecting stamps and other memorial logos.
12. Participating in professional programs such as carpentry, making ironmongery, dyeing, plumbing and so on.
13. Developing the love of voluntary work and charitableness for all mankind: undoubtedly, voluntary work is a great human service. Perhaps it requires reinforcing a spirit of belief in joint human goals, on which voluntary work is based, and in the nobleness of performing free social service as well as alerting generations to the importance of cooperation and its pleasant psychological affects. Attracting persons' attention towards the field of general charitable deeds requires spreading exalted ideas of voluntary work as a suitable opportunity to alleviate others' suffering and to realize self-fulfillment, which makes a person's life meaningful. Accordingly, the state should take into consideration that proper voluntary action is based on respect, justice, developing senses of loyalty and responsibility towards the homeland and society. Any field of voluntary action requires a proper base and sufficient budget to meet the volunteers' training, psychological, recreational and cultural needs. Moreover,

it is important to point out that voluntary action is not a static tool as it needs development and progress as well as the removal of obstacles that stand in its way. There is no harm in creating voluntary-educational centers that are affiliated to a center for life skills in general or for human capabilities. It is worth mentioning that establishing well planned charitable projects requires special qualifications which can be achieved by giving the young qualified courses in charitable work. Western institutions are interested in establishing special sections for training and qualification that cope with recent developments in charitable work and its related social and emotional effects. Certainly, the internet service will help us to achieve tasks and goals perfectly as well as to perform the required courses quickly. Furthermore, the mass media provides us with information about the activities of charitable associations and institutions and their projects and achievements in the field of *Da'wah* (calling for the implementation of Islamic values) and charitable works all over the world. The prominent role of charitable institutions is manifested in various honorable activities which can be classified as follow:

- Projects to establish mosques and centers for memorizing Qur'ân.
- Establishing health centers.
- Digging wells, whose number is steadily increasing.
- Participating in organizing activities concerning the welfare of the orphan, which play an effective role in laying the foundation of Islamic welfare and humanity.
- Taking part in effective relief campaigns at the time of starvation and floods in addition to material assistance such as foodstuffs and money that are distributed to the needy and injured families.
- Helping the handicapped or supporting charitable associations and other foundations to fight diseases such as cancer and diabetes.
- Participating in voluntary relief campaigns that deal with natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, starvation and so on.
- Contributing to activities designed to spread awareness of human rights in general and citizen's rights in particular as well as defending social issues or engaging in worthy activities.

Third: Psychological Treatments

We can present some psychological treatments for violence, depending on the view that the person achieves a psychological balance and a balanced correlative personality when he achieves the following:

- Reasonable satisfaction of biological needs along with emotional and spiritual satisfaction that is often achieved through religion and the integration of common mental activities and capabilities with rational social views.
- Fruitful work that reduces stress and increases positive feelings, like recreational activities and participation in social voluntary work.

Psychology, sociology and physics have made good progress to realize the idea of life-coaching clinics designed to solve psychological problems without drugs, stipulating that the solution stems from the willingness of the person to change his life pattern and ways of thinking. The life coach is a person who can teach people how to manage their life properly and discover latent energy that improves their condition along with employing new ways to resolve problems. Personality is affected by five elements: love, society, labor, money and spirituality. A defect in one element is sufficient to make a person vulnerable to failure and in need of a life coach. The life coach differs from the psychologist as he does not prescribe drugs for his patients. Also, he differs from the spiritual therapist because he does not use witchcraft or charlatanism. He only arranges a course of up to 8 sessions with the patient to develop suitable medication. The life coach often follows a therapy method in which he discusses various aspects of the problem to see if he can discover an attitude or significant aspect that can lead to a solution. While the psychologist works on past problems, such as addiction, depression or complexes, the life coach depends on the future and on resolving current problems, especially those related to violence. That is because the person may be successful in the eyes of society; however, he may be suffering from internal feelings of failure because society does not allow him to act as he wishes. Moreover, social stresses may be reasons for the failure of many persons who resort to violence.

Fourth: Reinforcing Cordiality and Good Relationships

In our current civilization, one may fail to find cordiality and good relations. This results in an increased trend towards violence. Undoubtedly, friendly relationships increase longevity and serve physical, psychological and moral health. Psychologists and biochemists agree that love is necessary for persons to have a long and healthy life. It is very difficult to define the concept of love as it extends to hobbies and other special concerns. All activities in which persons focus and that occupy their time are love activities. One of the reasons for longevity among women is that they have greater amount of love in their lives. They love their relatives, children and parents, which makes them the main elements of love on earth.

A scientific study, published in 'Time' magazine in 2004, revealed that love is a natural desire that is noticeable once the baby leaves his mother's womb to the outside world. This is clear when the baby raises his hands up as a sign of his need for someone to nurse him. Consequently, he continues to feel love for this person till he achieves a complete relationship with his partner. Scientists have discovered that this desire is a complex one that occurs in certain situations like fearful or tragic situations. Also, they are now sure of the idea that 95% of friendly relationships are generated in the brain. The study also showed that women are more affected by emotional words, moods and the surrounding climate, while men are more vulnerable to visual effects. Furthermore, love relationships have an effect on the brain, heart, immune system and various glands. Oxytocin is the main cause of a wide-range of positive effects of friendly relationships. It is secreted in the bloodstream and moves to all the body's tissues, including the remote ones. This, in return, results in organizing the body's temperature and blood pressure, and helps in healing injuries and alleviating pain. Researchers also noted that there is a link between mutual cordiality and decreased rates of breast cancer among women and prostate cancer among men, a linkage that scientists could not explain till now, despite their constant research.

Fifth: Building Faith and Adhering to Religious Principles

Monotheism promotes human dignity and releases minds form submitting to superstitions and materialism. It spontaneously leads to equality among people as their God is One and they are all His servants. Islam has the ability to unite people of various races and languages. It prohibits discrimination and urges sympathy and pity for even plants and animals. Undoubtedly, these human attitudes are the key to make people embrace Islam as it gives these new Muslims a chance to regulate their lives in a fair and balanced way, a goal that modern organizations of human rights never reached. The peak of Islamic tolerance is clearly manifest in the permissibility of the Muslim man to marry a woman from the People of the Books, which reinforces relations between Muslims and the People of the Books. The saying of `Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, "How did you enslave people while they were born free" has become the inauguration phrase for all constitutions around the world, thus Muslims must make use of it in fighting injustice and tyranny. These words were widely applied throughout the Islamic civilization, which is a civilization that stresses mercy for the weak as well as advocating the preservation of the rights of minorities. Muslims can probably reach an international Islamic law that regulates their relations with non-Muslims. Hence, Islamic civilization is the civilization of the future, promoting social security and peace in various developed aspects of humanity.

As Allah, Exalted be He, has provided the human body with antibiotics in order to fight microbes, we need also antibodies to fight intellectual and moral violence that threatens society. The religious culture, consistent with the spirit of the era, is the best way to confront this violence. There are many verses in the Qur'ân that urge self-purification, as Allah says:

> *{"And [by] the soul and He Who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]."}* [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7-10]

He also says:

{"By time. Indeed, mankind is in loss. Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to the truth and advised each other to patience."}

[Al-`Asr (The Afternoon): 1-3]

He also says:

{"Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord..."}

[Ibrahîm (Abraham): 24, 25]

Moreover, He says:

{"And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces [dissension] among them. Indeed Satan is ever, to mankind, a clear enemy."} [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey):53]

There are also many prophetic Hadîths that emphasize and urge this meaning, for example the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings:

"Virtue (or righteousness) is good nature."[1]

"An evil nature produces evil fortune."[2]

"A believer does not taunt, curse, abuse or talk indecently."[3]

"Modesty is an ingredient of faith."[4]

"By his good character, a believer will attain the degree of one who prays during the night and fasts during the day."[5]

"I have been sent to perfect righteous manners."[6]

(1) Related by Muslim, The Book of Virtue, Good Manners and Joining Ties of Relationship.

(2) Related by Abû Dâwûd, The Book of General Behavior.

(3) Related by At-Tirmidhî and deemed as *Hasan* (approved) *Gharîb* (single) *Hadtîh.*

(4) Related by Al-Bukhârî, The Book of Belief.

(5) Related by Imâm Ahmad.

(6) Related by Imâm Ahmad.

Additionally, Islamic principles encourage self-education, treatment of spiritual diseases, establishing virtues, removal of vices and training to be patient and contented by virtue of performing acts of worship. Islam is also the civilization of beauty, purification and contemplation of the Universe's beauty. Islamic education is based on the cohesion of families. Moreover, it urges good relations with the entire neighborhood and encourages good manners. So, it is ideal for confronting the negative aspects of contemporary civilization represented by dissolution and disunion.

In addition to the three known heavenly religions, there are more than 300 creeds with 3000 ramified doctrines. In this way sectarian and racial wars as well as immoderate thought have appeared which have reduced the tendency of people to consider religions in general. This requires educators and scholars of religion to develop methods to reconcile the foundations of religiousness using some facts of modern civilization which are necessary to build the identity of the contemporary individual. At the same time, the moderate religious individual has many positive aspects. The balanced creed (away from extremism and excessiveness) is, surely, a shield against various aspects of violence. Furthermore, principles of the creed in which a person believes play an important role in defining his inclinations, arranging his life and making him live in harmony with various aspects of life. There is no doubt that religions have the most important role in human life because they are, if moderate, among the important causes of a good life and tranquility, away from violence. Researchers in Duke University, in America, have discovered that deep belief in Allah as well as reinforcing the relationship with Him serve as effective treatments for psychological diseases. Also, there is a decisive evidence that the spiritual relationship with Allah, Exalted be He, results in peace and calmness in one's soul. The faculty of medicine, in Texas South Western University, added to its curricula a new subject related to spirituality and how to supplicate for peace.

Furthermore, the national health institutes, in America, have assigned thousands of dollars to a study concerning the relation between supplication and its role in achieving peace. This important study included more than 4000 persons and revealed that people who regularly keep on performing prayers experience better blood pressure than those who do not. Similarly, people who do not regularly keep on performing prayers experience better

blood pressure than those who never perform prayers at all. It also revealed that the more person fears his Lord the better his blood pressure becomes and the more he seems to be inclined to peace and cordiality. Moreover, people who keep on performing prayers and reciting Qur'ân are less vulnerable to disease than those who neither obey the orders of heavenly books nor abstain from what they forbid.

A study on patients of Saint Lock Hospital, in Texas University, revealed that patients for whom people supplicate feel improvement in their health by 11% compared to those who have no such support, even if the patient does not know that someone is praying for him. It is well-known that supplication for oneself alleviates stress and reinforces the immune system. But the question is how does supplication for another patient relieve his illness?

The only explanation for this lies in the upright man's ability to give some of his energy, with the blessing of Allah, to whom he wants. A study by the faculty of medicine in the Commonwealth University on 951 twins revealed that persons who give their first priority to religion are less vulnerable to depression, drug addiction and smoking than those who do not adhere to a religion. Their marital lives, also, become more stable. Additionally, a recent report published in the American magazine 'Newsweek', showed that people who keep on performing prayers in mosques or adhere to any of the heavenly books enjoy good health and a peaceful happy life. Scientists asserted authoritatively that the power of doctrinal inspiration has a decisive role in the treatment of diseases. These spiritual concepts have changed the attitudes of modern medicine leading to some developments in its fields.

Finally, we hope that the world will change to a fertile land of peace through cooperation and harmony of ideas and beliefs. Thus, races will fuse together and wars will disappear, leaving for next generations memories that indicate the foolishness of olden times. Also, we hope that international interest will focus on developing education, harnessing technologies to fight poverty and starvation, and finding new water resources. This superior human attitude requires international will and a collective vision, and above all, individual expectations to realize the dream.



Political Dimension of Violence



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Recent terrorism, in many of its aspects, has become media-related. Therefore, such a fact should be taken into account, as it means that those working in the media field, regardless of their positions, are exploited by some parties that run their battles and exercise their terrorism through the media, which is currently regarded as the most dangerous field.

Preface

It is said that the only thing that makes Einstein's Theory of Relativity difficult to understand is its simplicity!

When we look into the problem of violence, it seems easy albeit difficult. It seems easy with regards to its linguistic meaning and difficult when we think about the motives lying behind it. Also, it seems difficult when considering the ways of how to prevent it and find solutions for it.

The solution of such a problem cannot be in the form of a thesis or prescription because it should be dealt with practically in the field where the hard facts exist and confronted with strenuous political and diplomatic action through communication, dialogue, negotiation and judgment.

It goes without saying that the processes of building peace usually take a long time. This is because it takes time to prepare the political atmosphere, lay down the general principles, overcome differences and conduct strenuous negotiations to reach agreements and reconciliations. Afterwards, the peacekeeping and reinforcement efforts begin, which also call for political will and hard work.

Since violence and counter-violence emerge in an environment of false awareness and distorted perceptions, such an environment needs to be corrected. We also need to modify the weak speech of the politicians and the media, and get rid of the intrigues and accusations exchanged between conflicting parties.

Whenever we tackle a complex phenomenon, with multi forms and levels, from any dimension, it is important to study all its other dimensions in order to obtain a comprehensive view. Our discussion about the "political

dimension" is not limited to the concept of freedom and legality; rather, it includes all aspects of society as a whole. The political development and social balance still have issues of manifold dimensions. Some of these issues are related to foreign occupation, while others are related to internal crises such as the absence of freedom, the obstruction of political participation, the mutual non-recognition (of the other), the apathy about any means that lead to dialogue and the lack of equal opportunities.

Political violence is the core of the current crisis in most of the Islamic societies in the World. It is almost always associated with political work in many Islamic countries, regardless of the details which differ from one country and another. Undoubtedly, we urgently need to study such contemporary problems and understand all their dimensions.

The Meaning of Violence in Literature and Philosophy

In his explanation of the meaning of violence, the author of *"Lisânul-'Arab"* (i.e., "The Arabic Tongue") mentioned: Violence is to violate something and not to show mercy. For example, a violent man is one who cannot ride a horse skillfully, as the poet said:

They rode horses after their loss

Heavy they became and impetuous

Some literary works have shown great interest in expressing conflicts and violence. In his novel, "L'Homme Revolté," Albert Camus personalizes the state of the "rebel" who carries his sharp sword eradicating the existence which he has come to protect. Camus asks, "How did the nihilistic ideas take over the minds of the leaders of the humans, and lead them to harvest souls and humiliate the meaning of human existence itself? How could they kill seventy million persons within fifty years of the Twentieth Century?"

Below are the words uttered by the hero of a novel written by Amîn Ma'lûf, a Lebanese writer, describing the aspects of violence in the 16th century, "I swear by Allah, Who has enabled me to tour the wide world and made me taste as much suffering in Cairo as that in Granada, that I have never enjoyed such blatant slaughter, murder, destruction and profanation.

Is this how war is nowadays? The most courageous of knights could be killed by any naïve user of such cursed guns… This is the end of chivalry… the end of the glorious wars."

If writers are satisfied with describing and expressing their feelings, either by praising or condemning violence, philosophers, on the other hand, conduct profound analyses. However, the philosophers' analyses do not come up with decisive responses. To illustrate, philosophy considers a violent behavior as an unusual or indescribable act. Some philosophers said, "Reasonable and analytical thinking cannot comprehend the reality of violence, for it contradicts thought and logic." Therefore, the philosophical perspective in handling the phenomena leads to problems and questions more than answers.

The American philosopher, J. Laurence, wrote, "Violence has become a fashion in science and politics. It raises various questions, and gives room for contradicting points of view. What does the phenomenon of violence represent? Does it represent the law of life or the means of violating this law? Is it the enemy of man, progress and order, or, on the contrary, the basis and source of these matters? Is it a rational means for political relationships or a means of self-destruction? Is it a result of acquired traditions and culture or does it come about due to some natural and congenital traits? Is violence a disease or an intentional human behavior? Is it a natural, conscious, voluntary act for which the perpetrator carries – or should carry – full responsibility? Can society prevent and eliminate the causes and sources of violence using social means, or do they vanish by themselves in a natural way."[1]

Incapacitated Violence and Incidents of Violence in History

Violence exists everywhere and at all times. It is a world phenomenon, not a cultural pattern restricted to a certain society or category of people. There is no society that can avoid violence, but it can avoid the circumstances leading to it, or, at least, limit or control its forms or aspects.

(1) Denisof, "Theories of Violence; an Ideological Conflict", 1981, p. 16.

Societies – the same as a living creature – undergo processes of interaction and change. There are natural and necessary changes that sustain social stability. These are known as "periodical, phase-related developments or social structure-related changes." There are also changes resulting from the need for a social balance. Such changes may be controlled such as peaceful protests, or uncontrolled such as tensions, revolutions and aggressive social mutation.

This picture does not differ much from what already exists in nature as matters are united by the movements of atoms and molecules in order to generate energy. Recent scientific researches have proved that molecules move in an organized, united manner. Yet, there exists what is called a "heat sink" that can dissipate this energy and destroy this unity. By the same token, the human societies do not differ from this picture. That is, the united societies are effective and efficient, while the disunited ones are ineffective and suffer disorder[1].

Accordingly, there should be a distinction between the political movements that are based on strength and the violence-related movements (similar to "heat sinks") which dissipate the energy and vitality of a society.

Strength is a meaningful process of change with a historical background. On the other hand, violence is the use of physical power, or the threat of its use, without having any credible political outline; it is just a paralyzed act. Even in sports, there is a kind of distinction between strength and violence; there are games of strength and violent games.

There is an important criterion to distinguish between violence and strength, which is the existence of the ability, will and direction of available capabilities to move towards the right path. Therefore, one should differentiate between movements of political change that have fulfilled their goals and dealt wisely with society, and reckless reactions.

Political violence feeds on illusions of power and false awareness. Its defenders may engage in a bloody conflict just because of illusions that they are achieving their wish for salvation. It does not take long until they become entrapped in a complicated circle of successive reactions and difficult situations, and, consequently, lose control and find themselves involved in calamities.

(1) With a slight change, from Ahmad Zuwayl's "Voyage Through Time", pp. 73, 107 and 109.

How many religious revolutions failed because they did not seek the support of strong tribes in their fight against tyrant governments! According to Ibn Khaldûn, failure in such cases could be attributed to the strength and power of kings and countries such that they could not be destroyed except with a strong force supported by the strength of tribes and clans. Ibn Khaldûn said, "An example of this is the case of the revolutionaries from among the common people or *Faqîhs*, who are concerned with changing wrong actions. Many of those putting on the garment of worshippers and religious people fight the tyrant rulers, calling for the change and prohibition of wrong practices, commanding to do good while seeking the reward from Allah. Consequently, their followers and imitators from among the public or the mob carry out the same. Their followers face dangers and most of them die while guilty and unrewarded."[1]

In Islam, it is well-known that eliminating an atrocity by force is for those capable of changing it, provided that doing so does not cause a greater atrocity.

Rashness towards violence is an aspect of weakness not strength. That is, a strong man is the one who has the ability to control one's power, while observing the rules of war and the law. The aim of the organized war is not to crush and terminate an enemy; rather, it is to confuse it and weaken its powers to a degree that prevents it from fighting efficiently.

Violence in Light of the Political Development Problems

The phenomenon of violence has different dimensions – as we said earlier – including economic, cultural, social, political dimensions, etc. These dimensions are interlaced and connected, so they all need to be tackled individually.

The outburst of violence in any society, and what accompanies it of harm to the people and damage to their property, means the presence of a state of confusion and contradiction. This indicates that the society has failed, either economically or politically. The political dimension is one of the important reasons for violence, if not the most important one of all.

(1) *"Al-Muqaddimah"* by Ibn Khaldûn.

Man directs large amount of his activities to satisfy his material needs. However, man does not become content by fulfilling his material requirements only, but he needs recognition and respect as well. Every man believes he deserves such respect, because he has dignity and worth. The higher man's standard of living and equity of rights, the more he needs recognition. The Glorious Qur'ān mentions about honoring man and providing him with good things. Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with (definite) preference."} [Al-Isrā' (The Night Journey) :70]

People may enter into fatal conflicts when their dignity and esteem are abused. That is why some people believe that the most important human act is the struggle for recognition(1).

The relation between politics and violence is that of cause and effect or reason and result. To illustrate, compulsion begins when politics fails, and violence is the opposite of persuasion.

The conscious political society is capable of turning natural public dialogue to an official constitutional dialogue that exists everywhere, to an official constitutional dialogue that expresses itself in the form of political organizations, such as parties, societies, parliament, conferences, etc.

Societies are described as "civilized" when they have the ability to limit the causes of violence, especially the physical one. The World has witnessed significant changes in this respect when the political center of the modern state sustained the monopoly of violent actions – as was common during the pre-modern states – such as banditry and bloody hostilities. At that time, the political center could not overpower its subjects that lived in remote areas, except by just putting on an outward show. Although many political regimes, in the pre-modern states, used to show their bloody autocratic behavior, the level of their subjective sovereignty regarding daily social relations was relatively low(2).

(1) Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History and the Last Man", p. 158.

(2) Anthony Giddens, "Beyond Left and Right", 2002, p. 278

We have to admit that the rate of progress in the methods of destruction and violence today is related to the progress in the methods of control. An observer said, "The twenty-first century is exposed to be crushed by technology and chaos. The technological progress can help small groups of terrorists to execute actions that needed a huge army to execute in the past."

There are different circumstances that obviously imposed violence in the post-colonialism era. An example of this is that independent countries had to face the crises and problems of political development all at once. Since national governments had taken over everything, the legality crisis came to the surface when some groups and individuals began to violate the law and reject the political system. Indeed, some regimes achieved legality by establishing a constitution and laws, but their legality is incomplete due to the fact that not all the people have submitted to them. In addition, the crisis of national integration and unity has also emerged and become deeply-rooted due to the weakness of public loyalty for the system or state, as well as the presence of deep divisions, whether racial, political or religious. In other words, individuals' loyalty to their tribes or political parties may become stronger than their loyalty to their country. Also, in the case when personal interests or the party's interests happen to contradict with national ones, such individuals and groups give preference to their tribal, group or partisan loyalty.

There have also emerged the crises of freedom, political participation and communication. The aggravation of all these crises has caused the political arena to become liable to unlimited circles of political violence.

The crisis of legality has been reflected in the conflict between the secular approach and Islamic approach. This is because it is not possible for these two approaches to coexist together; that is, when either of them reaches authority, the other will automatically be eliminated.

The Islamists presented their plan as an original, civilized plan in opposition to Westernization, independence in opposition to foreign sovereignty, and consultation and national rule in opposition to tyranny. The advocates of this plan were accused as being the enemies of democracy and freedom, and that they were not carrying promoters of peace, but, rather,

they were calling for violence and disorder. For this reason, some countries tended to block and suppress any religious trend and prevent it from taking part in legal political activity.

A more accurate analysis will show that the great divisions based on racial, political or religious factors are symptoms of diseases afflicting the heart of political systems. Naturally, the desired stability will not be established by mere security and administrative control, but it requires political development by providing freedom, legitimacy, political participation, communication and comprehensive recognition of human rights and dignity.

Politics can be described as a broad dialogue among societal members. Through dialogue, society can overcome its contradictions. Here, it should be noted that the society afflicted with serious, internal contradictions is liable to collapse. This may happen as a result of not recognizing the human rights and dignity of members of the society.

For this reason, good policy seeks to prevent the occurrence of possible contradictions and splits, eliminate the sources of social disturbance by discovering the causes, and predict the results of disputes and tensions. Violence is not a direct result of objective reality, but it is a reflection of that reality on the people, and a wrong perception of this reality, which results in the presence of feelings of deceit, hostility and depression.

Countries need rules to organize and regulate order to prevent chaos. Each country has the right to exercise power in order to nullify counter-violence and extend its sovereignty. However, when a dispute exists, there should not be any initiative to use excessive power. That is, when violence takes place, the responsibility becomes mutual; the two parties have failed to create mutual understanding and sympathy, as well as understand the views of each other. Certainly, reaching a sound understanding with the "other" will lead to more understanding of "oneself".

It may be said, "Whatever opportunities for political participation and dialogue you may have, there will be always a group of people in every society that has a tendency towards violence due to their fanaticism, which blinds their sight and hinders sound thinking." In fact, violence is an

idea which is present in the mind before it materializes as destruction or bombings. Accordingly, the right treatment is to face ideas with ideas, not to terminate bodies out of revenge.

Those whose thought is centered on annihilation and suppression are not different from those who call for violence and extremism. The duty of a country is to exercise power controlled by law and guided by objectives and goals.

No doubt, facing violence with violence increases polarization and subsequent responses, and encourages unfavorable results. Also, the conflict between two opposing stances leads to the removal of the difficulty itself but the rise of greater difficulties.

In the case of violent conflict, it is very difficult to transfer from the stage of fighting to that of negotiation. Rather, the process of convincing parties to sit at the negotiating table is one of the most difficult steps. Some parties believe that facing their adversaries during negotiations and dialogue is more difficult than facing them in the battlefield. In this respect, the former Bosnian president Alija Izetbegović, may Allah have mercy on him, said that he had worked in many fields during his life. He worked, for example, as a woodcutter, a carrier of bricks and iron, and an employee in some courts. But he found that negotiation was more difficult than all such jobs[1].

Similarly, wars of terrorism are more difficult to fight than ordinary wars since you are fighting ghosts and there are no specific political or field leaders with whom you can carry out a dialogue. The priority, then, is to repel attackers and protect society, and in case they incline to peace and there is an opportunity to sit with them for direct or indirect negotiations, it is seen as the most suitable way to reach a solution.

The Crisis of Communication and Infiltration

Here, we shall tackle one of the crises of political development in detail due to its importance. We mean the crisis of "Communication and Penetration".

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(1) See: Inescapable Questions: Memoirs of Alija Izetbegović.

Attacks against the Media due to how they deal with terrorism are clear; there are clamors declaring that the media have turned away from their function of fighting violence to glorifying and instigating to it.

There are many problems related to violence that have imposed themselves on the international scene lately. These problems have come to light because of the increase in communication capabilities in the world. For example, traditional conflicts have been flaming between the tribes of Al-Grûn and Al-Krûn in the Sudanese province of Darfur for many years without being heard of by the rest of the world. In some combats during the 1980s, the number of the people killed reached 8,000. However, the problem quickly imposed itself on the world scene after this due to the revolution in mobiles and satellites.

In addition to its ability to double the possibility of delivering events to the public, international media picks only the bad news, seeking excitement and an increase in sales. Everyone is aware of the state of the international media and that it partakes in commercial competition for the sake of satisfying the viewers' curiosity for news. For that end, television stations and newspapers may disregard professional ethics. They may broadcast inciting statements by the same elements that are accused of violence, under the pretext that the viewers are able to obtain such material through the Internet or personal videos.

Violent incidents, with what they include of excitement and action, are still the most attractive media material. This characteristic is used by violent movements to attract attention and cause more suffering to the innocent. They may benefit from the need of the media for excitement, and, accordingly, they tend to capitalize on their actions and change their style. The reason behind this is that the incidents of violence are now measured in the media by their peculiarity, bloodiness and the expected number of victims.

In addition, movements that support violence have begun to enjoy the capabilities of propaganda tactics, especially timing events to reach the greatest possible number of viewers. That is why some authorities, including Western ones, such as the European Union, have begun to think about

reconsidering the strategy of dealing with terrorist incidents. They have seriously asked, "Is it necessary to quickly release the news of terrorist incidents or to withhold it, when possible? To what extent can the terrorism-related news be broadcasted?"

Naturally, it is impossible to prevent releasing such news, but it is possible to establish professional traditions and ethics that can enhance the performance of the media above political desires by putting the public interest above all other considerations. By doing so, it will be possible to stop enflaming feelings and cunningly showing disputes for no constructive reason.

In many of its aspects, recent violence has become related to media. Those working in the field of media should put before their eyes such a reality. Such changes have caused media professionals to be exploited by other parties who run their battles on the media scene. Numerous groups supporting violence have been able to direct the media in favor of their purposes. A clear example is that the widespread pictures and speeches disseminated through the media have, in fact, a two-fold purpose. They are, on the one hand, part of the negotiations with the other party in the conflict, and they, on the other hand, contain some encrypted messages. It should be noted that most of the stories of those kidnapped in Iraq, and whose pictures have been frequently broadcasted, have ended peacefully.

The American thinker Noam Chomsky presented two models of how to deal with violence. The first is the example of how the British dealt with the Irish Republican Army. The second is the American example of how they deal with what is called "International Terrorism". In both models, the media has been intensively used, but with different styles. Some lessons and principles can be drawn from both models, including the rule that the media should deal with terrorist incidents according to the dimensions of a crime, without any belittlement or exaggeration. The aim behind this is to report events as they are in reality, so that no unwanted effects on the audience can occur. That is, the realistic perception of events is the main factor that results in the Media taking the appropriate position.

One of Harvard's professors briefed this by saying, "Telling it like it is." It is necessary for the ordinary people to know what is happening around them. They should be aware of the details that may be important for them, no matter how bad they are, or else how can they support and advocate!

News, in general, is not good or pleasant speech. The media should undertake its mission of spreading awareness among the people about the problems related to their life and situation. The media has to take care to guide the audience to know how to act when a threat arises. At the time of a crisis, the role of the media is not to be restricted to presenting news and analyses. Rather, it should present life-saving information, and help the audience participate in warding off threats and dangers.

A Unanimous Islamic Attitude towards Violence Is Needed

A unanimous Islamic attitude towards violence should be developed. What is intended is not to state a definition or perception, as there are many ideas and views in this regard. Instead, the purpose is to develop a political and social methodology which takes into consideration the current circumstances and the situation of the Muslims.

We realize how important the methodological and intellectual principles of peace in Islam are. Understanding the problem of violence by a Muslim does not stop at just realizing that man is being accused of corruption and bloodshed, but it goes beyond that to work on a way of refuting such an accusation.

As mentioned in the Qur'ân, the Angels said to Allah, the Almighty:

{"... Will You place therein those who make mischief therein and shed blood..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 30]

In this verse, there is a proof that the angels knew Allah's aim behind creating the earth; namely, to reform and order it. So their question is accompanied by bewilderment, according to the interpreters of the Qur'ân. One of the contemporary Islamic scholars said that the charge of corruption and bloodshed is mentioned – in the verse – to show that Allah knows about man what the angels do not know.

Sheikh Jawdat Sa`îd said, "Some scholars exaggerate in interpreting topics and miss the point and meaning of the story when they tackle aspects that are not related to the solution of the problem for which Allah revealed such stories."[1]

The noble verses have, later, proved that man is preferred above all other creatures with the ability of learning and thinking, through which he can solve his problems.

The Muslims dealing with public issues need to take a unanimous attitude toward violence. This is because political action, due to its competitive nature, causes peoples' courses to always deviate from their stated goals. The Islamists may have contributed to increase division in the society and involve themselves in such deviation. Their adversaries have tried to prove that the Islamists are the main powers that practice violence.[2] These adversaries have also gone so far as to label the Muslims, in general, with violence, claiming that they do not follow the culture of peace. We know that a group of Muslims have been involved in violence, but claiming that all the Muslims carry out violence is absolutely not true. On the contrary, the truth is that the Muslims have found themselves a subject of violence under regimes they have not contributed in making after they emerged from occupation.

It goes without saying that the Muslims have suffered from violence more than others. Their participation in building the society has been hindered by violent means, even after they maintained legality through democracy and political struggle. There are many examples supporting this fact.

Whoever wishes to look fairly into the political experience of Islamists should differentiate between two forms of politics. The first is the legal policy which makes people closer to reform and farther from corruption. This is the policy of a life which builds positive relations and unites dissidents. It also exhorts the people toward their interests, and matters, according to it, are discussed on the basis of objective dialogue.

(1) See the book "Be like the Son of Adam" (Dar Al-Fikr, 1997).

(2) Hasanyn Tawfiq, "The Phenomenon of Political Violence in Arab Regimes" (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1992).

The second is the policy of disputes and maneuvers. This kind of policy causes every matter in the society to become a controversial problem and a subject for dispute. Even the religion, revealed by Allah as a judgment between dissidents, is taken in such a case as a subject of dispute. Indeed, there are some Muslims who practice the first kind of policy, while some others take the path of violence and clashes. If the latter naturally tend to practice violence, they can be reformed.

Some Islamists thought wrongly when they believed that violence was the only way to change situations. They committed the same mistake made by other groups. When looking into history, you find that violence became an absolute faith of the anarchists in Europe during the revolutions in the eighteenth century. Both communists and fascists thought that violence was the only means to bring about revolutions, which they termed as the "revolutionary violence", and that it was the creative power in history. Based on such beliefs, the new Leftist's thought was formed. Ironically, the violence-based regimes ultimately collapsed due to violence.

We should learn a lesson from the fate of Communism and Nazism in case "some groups rise among us, holding the banner of the true religion and the slogans of applying the tolerant *Sharī'ah*, but do not seek Allah's judgment to solve their problems; there is nothing easier for them than committing bloodshed and violating sanctities, under the pretext of denouncing wrong deeds."[1]

There have been many young generations who have grown up among groups with little understanding and knowledge of the *Sharī'ah*. They have only the experience of using weapons. When they face a problem, they rush to carry their arms, believing that this is the solution. They are, in this respect, much like the Kharijites (i.e., the Seceders), who were known for their lack of religious knowledge and *Fiqh* (i.e., Islamic Jurisprudence). However, they used to be sarcastic about those who spent time giving sermons and debates. One of their poets, Aṣ-Ṣalt Ibn Murrah, described orators as being astray. He said,

(1) Violence in Contemporary Muslim Transactions, Islamic Studies and Research Center, Riyadh, p. 13.

They became astray, and their efforts are wasted

In mere debates and sermons they engaged

I am the least affected one on earth

I have only my spear and my horse

Some of these groups have tried to turn the superfluous energy of the youth into violence, and their ethical ideals into extremism. Unfortunately, there are political leaders who have turned to invest the energy of the youth in order to achieve personal political gains. The author of these words experienced, due to his previous participation in students' activity in his country, that some leaders could not find any space for releasing their energy except through youth and student organizations. Sometimes, they would not refrain from exposing the life of those youths to death in order to stir up feelings that support violence.

The period of youth is an important one in the life of everyone. Among the characteristics of youth are the eagerness to follow examples, the tendency for self-assertion and the desire for change. Thus, the youth should be cared for and their natural needs regarding positive participation and moral aspirations should be satisfied.

There may be reasons for youth revolutions in every society, but they do not become violent except when they are instigated by those enthusiastic to change by using violence.

Hence, there is a difference between the few Muslims who practice violence and the general trend of Muslims who follow the way of peace, including the Islamic movements of change that have decided about their path and sought to achieve their aims according to a well laid-out plan and carefully-studied steps, so they have, or almost have, achieved their aims. Nevertheless, the way before some of these movements was blocked, so they entered into vicious circles of violence.

When we invite the Islamic World to hold a unanimous attitude towards the phenomenon of violence, we are, in fact, seeking a commitment to regulate group and individual behavior – according to a certain plan – so that violence is renounced. A unanimous attitude is represented by the readiness

and adoption of a collective stance; it is a mental, state similar to what the majority of people have. Moreover, it is not necessarily a general case, but it is something stable and regular, not accidental. An example of this is the renunciation of accidents such as hijackings, political assassinations, bombings and killing of civilians. These are denounced terrorist actions. If we went back to the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century, we would find out that the public attitude towards such actions was different, as many people used to describe such actions as heroic and irreproachable.

There are two other examples of this which is represented in two countries – one in Central Africa and the other in an Arab country – that have suffered civil wars for a long time. Due to the atrocities and horrors of these wars, a unanimous attitude against war has been taken. Consequently, when the motives and circumstances leading to a new civil war occurred, the war itself did not take place.

Both countries reached a unanimous stance against violence after they had suffered many sacrifices in wealth and lives. They spent many years living in chaos, torture, suffering and starvation. Unfortunately, most, if not all, of the unleashed fronts of violence now take place inside the Islamic World.

On the other hand, social peace is not restricted to being only an idea, but it exceeds this by turning this idea into a belief which guides individual and social behavior. Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"O you who have believe! Enter perfectly in Islam..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 208]

Allah, Exalted be He, also says:

{"And when they hear ill speech they withdraw from it and say, "To us our deeds, and to you your deeds, peace be with you, we seek not (the way of) the ignorant."}

[Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 55]



Doctrinal Partiality and Fanaticism



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One way to eliminate all forms of fanaticism is to develop educational curricula and media materials, both in the press and audiovisual media, which teach Muslims how to follow the truth, whatever it turns out to be, and to be liberated from blind dependency. In addition, Islam requires that we do not coerce others and we have to recognize their right to a free choice.

Fiqhî Dimension of Violence

A Required Understanding

Since the fourth major theme - "The *Fiqhî* Dimension of Violence... A Required Understanding" - which I selected from this book, is too broad, I have chosen to write on "doctrinal fanaticism and sectarian partiality" and their effect on the promotion of violence. I specify practical solutions to overcome, or at least reduce, fanaticism. I admit that it has been difficult to write on such a topic, which has too many, intermingled aspects.

First of all, I would like to remark that I am not writing this paper to satisfy or offend anyone. Rather, I am writing it because of a sense of duty to clarify my perspective on this question.

Fanaticism to a Particular Doctrine, Sect or Race

Fanaticism of any kind has an important role in creating the phenomenon of violence and extremism. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said:

> *"Your (extreme) love for anything causes (for you) blindness and deafness."*[1]

Thus, Islam pays attention to tackling this phenomenon. Islam requires Muslims to support the truth, whatever it may be, so that the society is pervaded with harmony, justice and benevolence.

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, the Chapter on Etiquette.

The current paper is divided into an introduction and four chapters.

1. **Introduction:** Definition of fanaticism
2. **Chapter 1:** Racial fanaticism - its effects and how Islam approaches it
3. **Chapter 2:** Sectarian fanaticism - its effects and how Islam approaches it
4. **Chapter 3:** Doctrinal fanaticism - its effects and how Islam approaches it
5. **Chapter 4:** Methods to deal with fanaticism

Introduction

Definitions of Fanaticism

- **Linguistically:** The lexical meaning of fanaticism is "excessive, irrational zeal or enthusiasm". A fanatic person is one who blindly supports and defends a wrong position adopted by a certain group.
- **Jurisprudentially:** Similar to the lexical meaning, fanaticism can be defined as "the act of defending or favoring a person, a belief or a dominant group, regardless of whether they are right or wrong, and forcefully rejecting the opposite, even if it is obviously right." Fanaticism may be represented as only words to express conformity with those of similar opinions and opposition to those of contradictory opinions. However, it may develop to an extreme degree, resulting in the refusal of the opposite party, and even killing them in some cases.

Chapter 1

Racial Fanaticism

Its Effects and How Islam Approaches it

Human relations are created on the bases of living in the same land, using the same language, having the same interests or belonging to the same ethnic origin. These links are the main underlying sources of conformity and mutual support among any group of people, even if this results in oppression of other groups. For a given group, oppression is not defined as acts committed by any of the group's members who share any of the aforementioned backgrounds. Any act will be considered as an act of oppression only if it is committed by members of other groups.

This chapter will focus on fanaticism which springs from ethnic ties; i.e. racial fanaticism.

Before and after the advent of Islam, many nations experienced this kind of fanaticism in which the individual is completely biased to his own race, whether they are oppressed or oppressors. It was found among Arabs in the Pre-Islamic era. Because of this fanaticism, one might support his tribe against another one, or even another race, even if this race has a distant relationship with this tribe. In other cases, the scope of fanaticism might be so narrow that one is loyal only to himself and his family.

Perhaps the code that best demonstrates this sense of fanaticism is the story in which a Pre-Islamic Bedouin was asked, "What do you think about justice?" He answered, "Justice is that I attack my neighbor and plunder his property." He was asked, "What about injustice?" He replied, "Injustice is that my neighbor attacks me and retrieves his property."[1]

This was the code or norm by which justice and injustice were judged in those Pre-Islamic days of ignorance. It is the same norm controlling these values in the present days of ignorance, and I think that this is so clear that it needs no proof.

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(1) Naṣr Farīd Wāṣil, Bombings and Threats Against People who are not engaged in hostilities, paper presented at the 17th session of the Islamic World League's Islamic Fiqh Academy, held in Mecca, 1424 AH/2003 AD, p. 20

Racial fanaticism prevailed among Arabs in those times and caused them to start conflicts, both on the individual and group levels. Injustice and oppression ruled over the society so much that one poet[1] expressed the mainstream of the time by the following verse:

He is so bold that if oppressed he quickly retaliates with oppression

And if he is not oppressed, he will oppress[2]

Undoubtedly, shared language, homeland, race and interests are all strong intra-national bonds. Among them, the most important bond is apparently the unity of race. But when put to trial, such factors prove very weak[3]; after all, interests should surmount all other considerations. Nevertheless, interests can easily come into conflict with others; so, at a certain point, the personal, family or even tribal interests (for those whose tribes or groups are deteriorating rapidly) become a top priority. Nations whose cultures acknowledge such a norm (i.e. racial favoritism) are always disdainful of others. They look down on others and feel a big difference between them and the others. For such societies, they are masters while others are slaves; they are the rich while others are the poor; they have the exclusive right to a pleasant life while others do not deserve it.

This kind of fanaticism prevailed among Arabs as well as other nations in ancient times. It also exists in today's world, though in disguise.

A present example of racial fanaticism is the Israeli occupation of Palestine: The Jews persecute the Palestinians, claiming that they are the Chosen People of Allah while the non-Jews are considered as undignified and deserve to be treated just as animals.

It is completely evident what consequences have resulted from such beliefs. The large-scale killing and expulsion of the Palestinians are considered the well-deserved rights of the Jews, on the basis that the Palestinians are a cause of danger for them. Since they are non-Jews, the Palestinians

(1) Zuhayr Ibn Abû Salmâ

(2) See Abû Zayd Al-Qurashî, Jamharat Ash'âr Al-'Arab (Collection of Arab Poetry), p. 109

(3) 'Abdul-Karîm 'Uthmân, Ma'âlim Ath-Thaqâfah Al-Islâmiyyah (Features of Islamic Culture), p. 137

have no right to their homeland, independence or property. It is completely lawful for the Jews to kill Palestine's men, women and children. But when a Palestinian kills a Jew, even if the latter attacks him in his home, this will be a stark instance of aggression.

How Islam Approaches Racial Fanaticism

When the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent to deliver the Message of Islam, Arabs were too tribalistic. Every tribe deemed itself superior to other tribes, and even every clan deemed itself nobler than other clans within the same tribe. This ideology governed all aspects of their life, whether in war or peace.

Islam came to eliminate such feuds, biases and sectarianism. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you peoples and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware."}*** [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

In Islam, the differences between nations and races should never be reasons for mutual hatred and quarrels. Otherwise, they should be factors working for coexistence and cooperation.

All the world is owned by Allah, Exalted be He, and humans have to fill it with good. Allah grants supremacy on earth to whoever He likes. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> ***{"Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you (mankind) whatever is on the earth...?"}*** [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 65]

Islam does not approve of boasting about one's lineage. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Say (O Muhammad): "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your kindred, the wealth which you have gained, the commerce wherein you fear decline, and the***

dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and Jihâd (i.e. striving) in His Cause, then wait until Allah brings about His Decision (i.e. torment). And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people."} [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 24]

In the same context, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

"O people of Quraysh (or similar words), buy (i.e. save) yourselves (from the Hellfire) for I cannot save you from (the punishment of) Allah; O Banû 'Abd Manâf, I cannot save you from (the punishment of) Allah; O Safiyyah, the Aunt of Allah's Messenger, I cannot save you from (the punishment of) Allah; O Fâtimah Bint Muhammad, ask me for anything from my own wealth, (but) I cannot save you from (the punishment of) Allah."[1]

He (PBUH) also said:

"Whoever calls for fanaticism is not from us (i.e. not a true Muslim)."

[Related by Abû Dâwûd]

He (PBUH) described and censured the fanaticism of the Pre-Islamic periods of ignorance saying:

"Leave it (i.e. tribalism, fanaticism) for it is a detestable thing."[2]

In another *Hadîth* related in the *Sahîh* (i.e. Authentic) Book of Al-Bukhârî, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Leave it (i.e. the call for tribalism and fanaticism) for it is a malicious thing."[3]

The last *Hadîth* was said on the occasion when a conflict occurred between an Emigrant and a Supporter during the time of the Battle of Al-Muraysî', and each one of them asked for the support of his own people.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on Al-Wasâyâ (Wills and Testaments).

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on the Interpretation of the Qur'ân.

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on Virtues.

Racial fanaticism also involves discrimination on the grounds of color and sex, which was also prevalent among Arabs, as well as other nations, before the advent of Islam. Today, it is widely found in several parts of the world. In some countries, for instance, public places (restaurants, etc.) are still restricted to a particular racial group and banned for other racial groups.

Islam, on the other hand, does not involve such color discrimination; difference in color has no value in Islam. This racial equality is not only a belief, but also a practice that characterizes the Islamic civilization.

Examples of this are numerous in the Islamic history: Bilâl Ibn Rabâh, (a black Muslim) may Allah be pleased with him, had a very honorable rank among the Prophet's Companions. Every day, Muslims gather in the mosques for prayer, no matter if they are white or black. In *Hajj* (i.e. Pilgrimage), the pilgrims of all colors and races travel to the same place and perform the same rituals, without any feelings of pride or difference. Usâmah Ibn Zayd Ibn Hârithah, may Allah be pleased with him, though black, was appointed by the Prophet (PBUH) as the commander of the Muslim army. The Prophet (PBUH) died before the army had moved. Then, Abû Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, sent the army under Usâmah's command.

'Amr Ibnul-'Âs, may Allah be pleased with him, sent a delegation to negotiate with Al-Muqawqis, under the command of 'Ubâdah Ibnus-Sâmit, may Allah be pleased with him, who was a black man. When they arrived at Al-Muqawqis, 'Ubâdah Ibnus-Sâmit stepped forward. Al-Muqawqis was overcome by his black skin and said, "Take this black man away from me and let another one talk with me." Other members of the delegation said, "This black man is the best of us in wisdom and knowledge. He is our leader and we all act upon his opinion. After all, the Emir entrusted him, not us, with the leadership of the delegation." When Al-Muqawqis looked a bit hesitant, they explained to him that black-skin is not considered a shameful thing in their culture.[1]

(1) Mustafâ As-Sibâ'î, Min Rawâ'i' Hadâratinâ (Excellent Advantages of Our Civilization), pp. 64, 65.

The current exploitation of women in shameful professions in the name of freedom is another aspect of racial fanaticism. It is propagated in well-designed, yet vain, rhetoric that has tempted many women, though some of them managed to realize its hidden agendas. Such feminist claims have been dealt with in the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*. In principle, Islam pays no attention to color or sex. The only norm of superiority in Islam is the level of piety and obedience to Allah, the Almighty, Who begets not nor was He begotten, and Who has neither wife nor relatives.

It is worth mentioning that there may be a misunderstanding about the Islamic approach towards the differences between men and women in terms of certain professions. In fact, such differences are related to the physical nature of both and not based on fanatical discrimination. For instance, men can never be responsible of giving birth and breastfeeding, nor can women perform the jobs that fit men because of the qualities they were born with.

Efforts to Incite Racial Fanaticism among Muslims

The enemies of Islam do their best to encourage racial feuds (tribalism, etc.) among Muslims in order to drive them away from their religion. They use well-thought strategies that result in dividing Muslims into small countries controlled by the enemies of Islam. Fanaticism has become so profound that a Muslim may watch his Muslim brother killed in front of his own eyes without even showing any feeling of resentment. In the past, Muslims were compliant with the teachings of Allah's Messenger (PBUH). He (PBUH) said:

> *"A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue Muslims are safe."*[1]

He also said:

> *"A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim, so he should not oppress him, nor should he hand him over (to an oppressor)."*[2]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on Faith.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on Oppression.

Chapter 2

Sectarian Fanaticism

Its Effects and How Islam Approaches It

A sect is a group of people associated together by virtue of a certain belief or practice. Sectarian fanaticism involves absolute bias to and support of a particular group's ideology and behavior, considering others as wrong and disregarding them. This is evident in many past and present partisan groups and alliances.

The Glorious Qur'ân teaches us how to observe the ethics of controversy, even if the other side is indubitably wrong. In fact, this is the most appropriate kind of leniency that is based on equality. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"...And indeed, (either) we or you are rightly guided or in plain error. Say (O Muhammad): "You will not be asked about our sins, and we will not be asked about what you do."}***
>
> [Saba' (Sheba): 24, 25]

If this is the case with the disbelievers, then this is worthier to be the case when debating with other Muslims, even if you know they are wrong.

Causes of Fanaticism

Below are some factors which contribute to this kind of fanaticism.

1. Blindly Following a particular Sheikh

Logic tells us that people are judged according to the truth. However, if it happens that the truth is judged according to people, this will result in fanaticism. The more this condition is prevalent, the more fanaticism will take place. Under such a situation, it will be difficult for a follower to find out whether or not his chosen mentor is right.

This point was addressed by Imâm Al-Mâwardî. He reported Al-Ghazâlî to have said, "I saw a man debating in a party. When his rival cited a sound rationale, he answered, 'This rationale is invalid because

my Sheikh did not mention it. Anything that my Sheikh did not advocate is certainly useless and invalid.'"[1]

This kind of fanaticism often results from excessively glorifying people, perhaps to the extent that their followers may believe in their infallibility or, ultimately, deify them. This is demonstrated by the Qur'ân regarding the case of the Christians. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"They (i.e. Jews and Christians) have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords besides Allah, and (they also took as their lord) the Messiah, the son of Mary..."}*
>
> [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 31]

2. Belittling Others

Another cause of fanaticism towards any sect arises when its opponents may strongly disparage and dispraise it. This may create a violent reaction among its members, making them more fanatical and supportive of their sect in every possible way.

3. Public Debates

In public debates, all contending parties are eager not to be defeated in front of the audience. Even if their opinions are proved wrong, they find it difficult to change their initial positions or admit that the opposite opinion is right. Consequently, this can strengthen fanaticism and widen the gap between the contenders. This is more likely to happen when the two parties are intentionally aiming to defeat their rivals completely in the argument.

4. Feeling Superior to Others

Some opportunists are skillful at flattering their leaders, praising any wrong opinions they may have and making them feel superior than others. The leaders and masters may initially incline towards this kind of speech, even with slight hesitation, but they come to believe such deceiving notions in the end. In some cases, leaders may believe that

(1) Al-Mâwardî, Adab Ad-Dunyâ Wâ Ad-Dîn (Etiquettes of the Worldly Life and Islam), p. 78; see also Muhammad Al-Khazandher, Fiqh Al-I'tilâf (Fiqh of Agreement), p. 76.

they are not only superior, but also that they are higher than humankind itself. Or they may even claim divinity, as in the example of Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh) in the Qur'ân:

> ***{"Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh) said: "O chiefs! I know not that you have a god other than me..."}*** [Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 38]

Pharaoh said to Prophet Mûsâ (i.e. Moses):

> ***{"If you take a god other than me, I will surely put you among the prisoners."}*** [Ash-Shu'arâ' (The Poets): 29]

He said to his people:

> ***{"I am your lord, most high."}*** [An-Nâzi'ât (The Pluckers): 24]

5. Ignorance and Narrow-Mindedness

Lack of knowledge about something or someone may make one fanatical against them. People tend to feel fanatical in favor of what they know and against what they do not know. This can be due to having no opportunity to acquire new information, being influenced by some group leaders or statesmen who use power to prohibit their subordinates from looking at other opinions, which is a feature of the dictatorial systems, or an outcome of not being acquainted with the true facts.

This point can be demonstrated by two examples which I find quite relevant.

A North African Muslim family living in the U.S.A. reported that their school-age daughter told them how their teacher introduced fabricated information about Islam to her classmates. In such a case, what would be expected from those children whose teacher told them lies about Islam, whether intentionally, which was probably the case, or not?

Another example: A young Muslim man traveled to study in Canada and married a Canadian woman who embraced Islam after marriage. Her parents refused to give their blessings to her marriage and tried to prevent her from being a Muslim. When they failed, they broke relations with their daughter and her husband. After completing their study, the new couple moved to Europe. The man kept contacting his wife's family occasionally, but they insisted on their position.

The wife was deeply depressed over her parents' bad treatment. After years, the parents really missed their daughter, so they visited her small house in Europe. They were warmly welcomed by their son-in-low and stayed there for days. Although they expected the opposite, they noticed how kindly he treated his wife. They were interested that their son-in-law had a luxury car. They wondered, "Does your religion permit its followers to have such a car as this?" He answered, "Of course! Islam even permits a Muslim to have as many luxury cars as he can afford!"

In fact, it is really pitiful that these people had such fallacious information about Islam and Muslims. Most likely, they had thought that their son-in-law would give his wife a hut and a donkey instead of a modern house and a car.

This is how ignorance can cater for fanaticism.

6. Absence of Freedom and Security

Within an environment of freedom and security, everyone can express his opinions fearlessly and discuss other opinions objectively without threats. This helps clarify the truth of everything, and thus you can adopt or reject any opinion with your own will and free choice.

7. Social Environment and Social Development

Being a member of a family that is fanatically inclined to a particular idea, group or race and disdainful of others will only produce fanatic mentalities. The more fanatic families are found, the more fanatic the society will be. If a member of such a family attempts to relinquish these attitudes, he will find himself in a fierce conflict with his family, and even with himself, too.

For example, I learnt about a well-educated young woman who refrained from marriage because of her family's superior nature. She had great difficulty settling this problem and only settled it after she had discarded her family's haughty manner. She could never reveal such details unless she trusted in those to whom she talked about her problem.

Chapter 3

Doctrinal Fanaticism

Its Effects and How Islam Approaches It

A doctrine is a principle or body of principles presented by an *Imâm* with regard to rulings based on *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion). Here, we will focus solely on the doctrines and schools pertaining to Islamic *Fiqh* and Creed.

Obviously, these schools and doctrines have not been created all at once; they went through several stages until they became fully developed. Attributing them to particular persons was done arbitrarily, on the basis that it was these persons who made the basic contribution to them.(1)

The present chapter is divided into two sections: Doctrinal fanaticism relating to the schools of Islamic Creed and doctrinal fanaticism relating to the *Fiqhî* (Juristic) schools (non-Muslims are out of the scope of this chapter).

I. Doctrinal Fanaticism in the Islamic Creed

It is not intended here to discuss how the schools of Islamic Creed developed. This is an independent and lengthy topic which has been extensively studied.(2) We will only focus on doctrinal fanaticism and how it has produced dissentions that were subversive against the Islamic nation over its long history. In this paper, we choose to discuss the fanatical attitudes of the Kharijites, their negative effects on Muslims in the past, and how some Companions dealt with them.

Some people broke away from 'Alî Ibn Abû Ṯâlib, may Allah be pleased with him, and deemed him a disbeliever as he accepted the Issue

(1) 'Umar Al-Jîdî, Muḥâḏarât Fî Târîkh Al-Madhhab Al-Mâlikî (Lectures on the History of the Mâlikî School), p. 7

(2) See Abul-Ḫasan Al-Ash'arî, Maqâlât Al-Islâmiyyûn (Opinions of Muslims), p. 39-64; Abû Zahrah, Târîkh Al-Madhâhib Al-Islâmiyyah (the History of the Islamic Doctrines), p. 96

of Arbitration(1). Some of the society's distinguished figures propagated such false claims widely among the public. As a result, 3 approaches were adopted:

- Some supported 'Alî, and a number of them exaggerated their love for him so that they even attributed divine qualities to him.(2)
- Some revolted and declared war against him.(3)
- Some took a different approach from those of the two aforementioned groups.

It was fanaticism that resulted in such a breakup and, in turn, the subsequent weakness and distress of the Islamic nation. Therefore, instead of paying attention to calling others to and defending Islam, the nation wasted its efforts attempting to deal with its own problems and weaknesses.

Each one of the first two categories was divided into two groups: One group was too overwhelmed by fanaticism to consider, or even listen to, any claims contrary to their own. They became more and more fanatic, especially when someone tried to show them the truth.

The second group was not so fanatic and was able to return to the truth when they realized it. Imâm Adh-Dhahabî reported a dispute between Ibn 'Abbâs and the Kharijites in 38 A.H. It is cited here to demonstrate this point:

"When the Kharijites were gathering at their hometown (to revolt against 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib), totaling about 6,000 persons or so, Ibn 'Abbâs said to 'Alî, 'O Commander of the Faithful, delay the (*Zuhr*) prayer until it

(1) An arbitration was made on who would be selected as the Caliph of Muslims. The Kharijites deemed 'Alî as a disbeliever, arguing that he accepted a human judgment while Allah says: *{"...Judgment is not but for Allah..."}* [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 57]

(2) See Imâm Ar-Râzî, I'tiqadât Firaq Al-Muslimûn Wâ Al-Mushrikûn (Beliefs of the Sects of Muslims and Disbelievers), Section "Firaq Ash-Shî'ah" (Sects of the Shiites), p. 52-63.

(3) See Imâm Ar-Râzî, I'tiqadât Firaq Al-Muslimûn Wâ Al-Mushrikûn (Beliefs of the Sects of Muslims and Polytheists), Section "Firaq Al-Khawârij" (Sects of the Kharijites), p. 46-51.

gets cooler[1] so that I can go to those people (i.e. the Kharijites).' 'Alî said, 'I fear that they may harm you.' He said, 'Do not!'

Ibn 'Abbâs wore two of his best pieces of clothes, in which he looked very elegant. When they saw him, they said, 'Welcome, Ibn 'Abbâs! What is this garment that you are wearing?' He said, 'What do you blame me for? I saw Allah's Messenger (PBUH) wearing a very beautiful garment.' Then, he recited the verse:

> ***{"Say (O Muhammad), "Who has forbidden the adornment of (i.e., given from) Allah which He has produced for His servants...?"}*** [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 32]

They said, 'What brought you here?' he replied, 'I have come to you from (the place of) the Commander of the Faithful and the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), none of whom I see among you. I will inform you about what they said and inform them about what you will say. What have made you bear a grudge against the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (PBUH)?' Some of them said, 'Do not talk with him, for Allah says:

> ***{"...But, (in fact,) they are a quarrelsome people."}***
> [Az-Zukhruf (Decoration): 58]

Others said, 'What prevents us from talking to them? What prevents us from talking with him? He is the cousin of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and he is inviting us to return to the Book of Allah (i.e. the Qur'ân).' Then, they said, 'We have three things against him. First, he allowed men to judge (on matters predetermined by Allah) while judgment is only for Allah. Second, he fought in the Battle of *Al-Jamal* (the Camel) and took neither captives nor spoils. If it was permissible to fight his opponents, then it would be permissible to capture them, but if it was not permissible to fight, then it would not be permissible to capture them. Third, he denied the title of the Commander of the Faithful. So, if he is not the Commander of the Faithful, then he is the Commander of the Unfaithful!'

(1) It is religiously permissible to delay the *Zuhr* prayer for a while until it gets slightly cooler, according to the Prophetic *Hadîth*:

"Delay the (Zuhr) prayer till it gets cooler, for the severity of heat is from the heat of the Hellfire."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on the Beginning of the Creation]

Ibn ʽAbbâs asked them, 'Anything else?' They replied, 'That is enough.'

He said, 'If I bring to you from Allah's Book and His Prophet's *Sunnah* what refutes such allegations, would you give them up?' They said, 'What shall prevent us (if you are right)?'

Ibn ʽAbbâs said, 'Concerning the point that he allowed men to judge on matters predetermined by Allah, I know that Allah says in His Book:

> ***{"...As judged by two just men among you..."}***
> [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 95]

This applies to the price of a rabbit or so, costing a quarter of a dirham. He (i.e. Allah) also allowed people's judgment on any quarrel between a woman and her husband. He, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"And if you fear a dissension between them twain (the man and his wife), send an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family..."}*** [An-Nisâ' (Women): 35]

Have I then got this point across?' They replied, 'Yes.'

Ibn ʽAbbâs said, 'And concerning the second point, it is the party of your mother ʽÂ'ishah whom ʽAlî fought. Allah says:

> ***{"...And his (i.e. the Prophet's) wives are their (i.e. believers') mothers..."}*** [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 6]

So, if you allege that she is not your mother, then you will be disbelievers; and if you acknowledge that she is your mother, then it is not permissible to capture her. So, you are between two falsehoods. Have I then got this point across?' They replied, 'Yes.'

Ibn ʽAbbâs said, 'And concerning the third point, do you not know that on the Day of Al-Hudaybiyah, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) conducted a peace treaty with Suhayl Ibn ʽAmr? The Prophet said,

> *"Write, O ʽAlî: This is what was agreed to by Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah."*

Then, they (i.e. the disbeliever's party) said, 'If we believed that you are the Messenger of Allah, we would not fight you; write your name and your father's name!'

Hereupon, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said,

"O Allah! You know that I am Your Messenger."

Then, he took the paper and erased the writing with his hand. He said,

"O 'Alî, write: This is what was agreed to by Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah and...."

By Allah, this never divested him of his prophethood. Have I then got this point across?' They replied, 'Yes.'

After that, one third of them (i.e., the rebels) gave up their revolt."[1]

As for those whose fanatic beliefs blinded them from seeing the truth, it would be sufficient to cite the account of *Imâm* At-Tabarî, Master of the Historians, which exposes their perverted nature.

At-Tabarî quoted Humyd Ibn Hilâl as saying, "Some Kharijites moved from Basra and camped near Nahrawân. A group of them walked around and passed by a man holding a donkey with a woman riding it. They attacked him forcefully and said, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'I am 'Abdullah Ibn Khabbâb. My father was a Companion of the Prophet (PBUH).' He leaned down to pick up his cloak, which had dropped off his shoulders, when they surprised him. They said, 'Have we frightened you?' He replied, 'Yes.' They said, 'Calm down! Tell us a *Hadîth* that you heard your father reporting from the Prophet (PBUH), so that Allah may benefit us by it.' He said, 'My father told me that the Prophet (PBUH) told of a period of turmoil in which a man's heart will die just as his body will die. One will be a believer at night and will become a disbeliever in the morning, and another will be a disbeliever in the morning and will become a believer at night.' They said, 'It is this *Hadîth* that we asked you for. What do you think about Abû Bakr and 'Umar?' He praised both of them. They said, 'What do you think about 'Uthmân at the beginning and the end of his Caliphate?' He answered, 'He was right at the beginning and end (of his Caliphate).' They said, 'What do you think about 'Alî before and after the Arbitration?' He replied, 'He is more knowledgeable about Allah (i.e. His Prescriptions

(1) Adh-Dhahabî, Târîkh Al-Islâm (the History of Islam), Section "'Ahd Al-Khulafâ' Al-Râshidûn" (the Era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs), pp. 588-590

and Prohibitions), more careful about his religion and more insightful than you.' They said, 'You are just following your whims and supporting particular persons because of their names (i.e. because you love them), not for their deeds. By Allah, we will kill you in a (horrible) way that we never used to do with anyone else.' Then, they roped him up and took him and his pregnant wife until they reached an area with fruitful palms. A date fell down and one of them put it into his mouth. Another one of them said, '(You took it) with no right and without paying for it.' Immediately, the man spat it out of his mouth. Later, he drew his sword and started to play with it. He saw a pig owned by a *Dhimmî* (i.e. a free non-Muslim enjoying Muslim protection) so he killed it with his sword. They said, 'This is an act of doing mischief in the world.' Thereupon, he went to the owner of the pig and compensated him for it. When Ibn Khabbâb saw their behavior, he said, 'If you are sincerely faithful in what you are doing, then you will never do any harm to me; I am a Muslim, I did not innovate a heresy in Islam, and you have already reassured me by saying: Calm down!' However, they laid him down and slaughtered him. His blood ran into the water of the river. When they turned to his wife, she said, 'I am just a woman! Do you not fear Allah?' They cut open her abdomen."[1]

How fanaticism affects Muslims' life today is evident in the violent and destructive actions practiced by some of the Islamic sects in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This effect is most obvious in Iraq. Fanaticism causes many of them to collaborate with the occupation army, whose purpose is to annihilate countries and their people, and incite them against their Muslim brothers. This is just an imitation of the previously exemplified practices of the Kharijites.

The same effect can be seen in the allegations propagated against distinguished scholars and authorities by some fanatical parties. Even the few who are excluded from defamation are disparaged in some way or another.

In the last few decades, the Islamic world has been afflicted with some "defamers" who consider that all people are wrong, especially those engaging in *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings). This defamation seems

(1) Aṭ-Ṭabarî, Târîkh Al-Umam Wâ Al-Mulûk (the History of Nations and Monarchs), 3/119

to be purposeful and well-planned. They are followed by some ignorant people whose sole job is to categorize other people and practice different types of intellectual terrorism against them, which often surpass political and military terrorism. They take their *Fiqhî* judgments only from a very limited set of sources, while all the other people, in their eyes, have incorrect and unreliable beliefs and *Fiqhî* opinions.

Such ignorant people have caused the nation to experience very destructive dissentions and difficulties. They are even utilized by some rulers for their own goals and interests. For them, the *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in the way of Allah) of Muslims against their enemies is fallacious, and paying charity to the poor Muslims is not a benevolent act since these poor Muslims have misguided beliefs. At the same time, they never prevent the wrongdoers nor defy the deviant rulers. After all, it is well-known to everyone how their malicious plots affect the life of the Muslims.

II. Doctrinal Fanaticism Relating to the *Fiqhî* Schools

It is not our objective to discuss how the different schools of Islamic *Fiqh* developed. However, a brief introduction may be relevant.

During the life of the Prophet (PBUH), when something happened and he was asked about it, he gave answers depending on the Revelation. When his Companions practiced *Ijtihâd* in their lives, he commended any right judgments they came up with and corrected their wrong inferences.

After his death, his Companions referred to the Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, and practiced *Ijtihâd* on matters not included in these two major sources, using analogy and their good judgment.

The Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, did not all have the same level of apprehension and deduction. They sometimes differed in their opinions. If this difference was due to the lack of certain information, they would immediately adopt the right opinion when they came to know the missing facts about the matter. However, if such differences resulted from taking different approaches to the same issue, each party would give verdicts but they did not belittle other verdicts.

More often than not, they engaged in debates that were even heated in some cases, just to come to a compromise at the end or for one party to acknowledge the argument of the other one.

Such principles of *Ijtihâd* were established practically by the Prophet (PBUH) by training them on how to differ. The best example of this was during the preparations for the Battle of Banû Qurayzah: The Prophet (PBUH) told the Muslims not to perform the *'Asr* (i.e. Afternoon) Prayer except in the area of Banû Qurayzah. The Companions immediately acted upon this command. On their way, the due time of the *'Asr* Prayer was about to relapse. Some of them performed the Prayer before arriving at their destination, considering the Prophetic command to imply moving as fast as possible. Others, on the other hand, delayed the Prayer until they reached the town just before sunset. When the Prophet (PBUH) learned about that, he did not blame either of the two parties, which implied his approval of their *Ijtihâds* as long as the literal command had different meanings.

The wisdom and knowledge of the Companions were communicated to the subsequent generations, and the *Fiqhî* schools began to take a definate shape and existence. A scholar was required to first be a student under a *Mujtahid* (i.e. one practicing *Ijtihâd*) and would later become a reliable scholar who had a distinctive doctrine by meeting the conditions of *Ijtihâd*. At a particular point, absolute *Ijtihâd* began to decline, and imitation became the mainstream. Some *Fiqhî* schools dominated and acquired many followers, while other schools regressed. After many centuries of slumber, some Islamic *Fiqhî* reformers have appeared and attempted to enlighten the Muslims in knowledge and practice. They have been supported by some people and fought by others.

During that period of backwardness, doctrinal fanaticism in following *Fiqhî* schools began to play a key role in disuniting the nation. Surely, fanaticism was present in the early days of the *Fiqhî* schools, but it was just an aberrant behavior. In fact, the intelligent students used to study under Imâms with different doctrines. This was not something improper and students who studied under various teachers were not stigmatized, as is the case these days.

Causes of Doctrinal Fanaticism

1. **Transgression:** It can be defined as exceeding the due bounds or limits, which can produce exaggeration in love and hatred; when one loves something, it becomes perfect in his eyes, and when he hates it, he sees it as absolutely evil, though it may have, undoubtedly, some good points. Even if it happens that his mind tells him he is wrong, which is rarely the case, he proceeds to find some justification and give his words a misleading twist.

   Examples are too many to be presented here. It is sufficient to highlight the Qur'anic description of the differences that occurred between the People of the Scripture. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

   {"Mankind was one community and then Allah sent the Prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over it (i.e. the Scripture) except those who were given it - after clear proofs had come unto them - out of jealous animosity among themselves..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 213]

   He, also, says:

   {"Indeed, religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves..."} [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 19]

2. **Personal desires and inclinations:** They include everything (money, superiority, high position, women, etc.) that someone wishes to possess. In fact, they do encourage fanaticism; when one finds something that gratifies his desires, he will support it and hate anyone who disagrees with him. In all his judgments, he will be far removed from fairness and objectivity.

   The Qur'ân repeatedly censures following one's desires and tendencies. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

{"...And do not follow (your) desire, as it will mislead you from the Path of Allah..."} [Sâd: 26]

He also says:

{"...And who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah?..."}

[Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 50]

3. **Ignorance and lack of knowledge:** Ignorance is the condition of taking a belief to be certain, while it is incompatible with reality. In general, things that one does not know are far more than those one knows. However, one may forget this fact, thinking that what he knows is absolutely right and what others know is wrong. Therefore, he may deny any opinion which is different from his, just because he does not know about it. If he is flexible, he will change his mind once he learns about the truth. But, if he is narrow-minded, it will make no difference whether or not he is introduced to the truth.

   Most of the instances of doctrinal fanaticism result from such ignorance, especially when some people try to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, despite their lack of knowledge, and thus they confuse right with wrong.

   Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî wrote: "Once I gave a *Fatwâ* (i.e. legal opinion based on *Shar'î* evidence) that it is permissible for a woman to perform *Hajj* alone as long as she is amongst safe and reliable people. A blind student shivering with anger caught my hand and said, 'How could you give such a judgment which contradicts the *Sunnah*?' I answered, 'I am just reporting the judgments of Ash-Shâfi'î and Mâlik, may Allah be pleased with them.' He said, 'They are inconsistent with the *Sunnah*.' I said, 'No, they are not!' Then, I explained the issue to him."(1)

(1) Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî, Dustûr Al-Wihdah Ath-Thaqâfiyyah Bayn Al-Muslimûn (the Code of Cultural Unity Among Muslims), p. 89

Manifestations of Doctrinal Fanaticism

When fanaticism prevails in a society, it influences all aspects of life in this society as a whole. These nefarious influences include:

1. Concealing the Truth, Even If Obvious

A fanatic person hides the truth and can even tell lies to defame the "other". History is full of examples of this fact.

2. Maligning Trusted Scholars

Ash-Shawkânî, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "Among the characteristics which the fanatics have is that they always avoid the just scholars, attack anyone who relates to or studies under them, and warn students and laypersons against them. They claim that a particular scholar will lead people astray from their sound doctrines. They accuse that scholar of false allegations which, once heard, can arouse the Muslim's feelings against him.[1]

3. Playing with Words

It is a fanatical practice to manipulate words to indicate different, offensive meanings. For example, the word "pretentious" has come to be used to describe any faithful Muslim who tries his best to apply the *Shar`î* rulings and guidelines, even if only privately in his own life, though the word originally involves those who adopt Islam outwardly while hiding disbelief in their heart. Thus, when used about someone, the word brings to the people's minds the original, negative meaning, although the person being thus charged may be righteous.

Also, the word "terrorist" is used, both in Muslim and non-Muslim communities, to describe any Muslim who is committed to his religion.

Ash-Shawkânî reported how the use of the phrase "People of the *Sunnah*" changed in his society; instead of having a very positive connotation, it became used by the fanatics to describe anyone who patronized Mu`âwiyah against `Alî, in order to wrongfully defame scholars and Muslims[2].

(1) Ash-Shawkânî, Adab At-Talab (Etiquette of Requesting), p. 128

(2) Ibid.

4. Restricting the Right Way to One Single Person

Among the aspects of fanaticism is to consider the opinions of a particular individual as the one and only truth, and any other opinions as absolutely wrong. 'Izz Ad-Dîn Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm pointed out that some followers are so obsessed that they think the truth is confined to the doctrines of their *Imâm*[1].

The bad outcome of this was highlighted by Imâm Suhnûn Ibn Sa'îd Al-Mâlikî, "The most daring to give *Fatwâs* are the least knowledgeable. Ironically, one may have little knowledge but thinks that he knows everything."[2] This is obviously noticeable in the present times; there are many novices (or so-called "learners") who think they have come to know everything while they even make mistakes in the grammar. When you listen to their thoughts, you find that you have to relearn the alphabet in order to understand their "unique" language. Such kinds of people proceed to give *Fatwâs* within the scholarly circles. At best, they maintain that their opinions are the most reasonable verdicts; at worst, they never mention that there are opinions opposite to theirs, not even considering those who differ with them as existing.

For example, if told about the verdict of Imâm Mâlik on a particular issue, they would rage, "Who is Mâlik?! Did he study the *Sunnah* or memorize the Qur'ân?" However, if a verdict of Imâm Mâlik is in harmony with their own views, they would claim, "This is said by Mâlik. What a sound proof!" Thus, you may feel confused whether or not they are talking about the same person.

How Islam Approaches Doctrinal Fanaticism

Islam prohibits all kinds of fanaticism and urges advocacy of what turns out to be correct when there is any difference of opinion, providing that those with different opinions are not deprived of their rights to propagate their views.

(1) Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm, Qawâ'id Al-Ahkâm (Principles of Rulings), 2/136.

(2) 'Iâd, Tartîb Al-Madârik (Orders of Perceptions), 4/75

Fanaticism on the grounds of color, sex or race is strongly disapproved of in Islam, which protects human dignity. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> *{"And, indeed, We have honored the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with (lawful) good things, and have preferred them over many of what We have created, with (definite) preference."}*
>
> [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 70]

The Qur'ân emphasizes that all human beings belong to the same origin and are equal. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"O mankind! Indeed, We have created you from male and female..."}* [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

He, also, says:

> *{"O mankind! Fear your Lord, Who created you from a single person (i.e. Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [i.e. Hawwâ' (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and women..."}* [An-Nisâ' (Women): 1]

Earlier in this chapter, we discussed how the black Companions enjoyed a very honorable standing in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and after his death.

Islam prohibits the support of injustice. In the Pre-Islamic era of ignorance, it was said, "Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one." In Islam, the saying was used implying a different meaning. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one." They said, "O Messenger of Allah! We may help him if he is oppressed, but if he is an oppressor, how can we help him?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "You should prevent him from oppressing (others)."*[1]

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on Oppressions, the Section of "Help your brother whether he is an oppressor or an oppressed one".

Islam prohibits the sanctification of humans, which is one of the acts which encourage fanaticism the most. Being the ever best of all creation, the Prophet (PBUH) warned his nation against exaggerating in praising him like the Christians exaggerated in praising Jesus. He (PBUH) said:

> *"Do not exaggerate in praising me as the Christians have done with the Son of Mary (i.e. the Christ), for I am only a servant (of Allah). So, call me 'the servant and Messenger of Allah'."*[1]

The Prophet (PBUH) left behind a generation that most sincerely adhered to the Prophetic teachings, did not sanctify people, advocated only the right, did not wrong others and refused to be wronged. There are too many examples from the Companions' life to be stated here, so we will give only one, clear example: Islam never prevents anyone whomsoever from being equal to other Muslims when he embraces Islam. Regarding the tolerance and leniency of Islam towards non-Muslims and how it deals with them, the examples are countless[2].

Difference in opinion and uncertain judgments is inevitable, due to the individual differences in cognitive backgrounds, mental abilities and points of view. We gave an example that the Prophet (PBUH) trained his Companions to live by during his life. These morals continued after his death; we mentioned that they debated many issues, but this never affected their relationships nor reduced the mutual love among them.

Here are some issues upon which the greatest Companions disagreed, but did not quarrel about:

1. They differed about the death of the Prophet (PBUH); in this regard, the story of Abû Bakr and 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, is quite well-known.
2. They differed about where to bury the Prophet (PBUH).

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on the Prophets.

(2) We stated some of these examples in a paper we presented in a conference organized by Âl Al-Bayt University (Jordan) last year. See also Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî, At-Ta'assub Wâ At-Tasâmuh Bayn Al-Masîhiyyah Wâ Al-Islâm (Fanaticism and Tolerance between Christianity and Islam) in which he included many examples.

3. They differed about fighting against the Apostates.
4. They differed on whether or not a grandmother is to take a share in the inheritance.
5. They differed on the issue of asking for permission to enter a place.

Later, they agreed on all these matters when they had been informed of the true proofs from the *Sunnah* regarding these matters. In the subsidiary matters of *Fiqh*, however, controversies among them were quite bigger. Some debates were never settled among them, but they actually dealt tolerably with such difference in opinion and never censured each other. Here are some examples of these minor disagreements:

1. 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, adopted an opinion that there is no set time limit for wiping over *Khuffs* (i.e. leather socks)[1].
2. Abû Bakr and 'Umar differed on whether brothers take a share of the inheritance when a grandfather has a share. Abû Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, considered a grandfather as a parent, and thus brothers would be excluded from the inheritance. On the other hand, 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, believed that brothers are entitled to share the inheritance with a grandfather.

   The books on Comparative *Fiqh*, interpretation of the Qur'ân and explanations of *Hadîth* are full of such kinds of issues on which the Companions disagreed. Each one of them maintained his opinion since there was no clear evidence to rely on. It was a matter of *Ijtihâd*.

The same happened repeatedly in subsequent times. Here are two examples.

First, 'Abdul-Wârith Ibn Sa'îd once asked three *Fiqhî Imâms* about an issue and he received three, quite different answers. He asked Abû Hanîfah, Ibn Abû Laylâ and Ibn Shubrumah about the ruling of conditioned sale. The first answered that the sale and the condition

(1) It is religiously permissible to rinse one's hand in water and then wipe one's leather socks as part of ritual ablution, instead of washing the feet directly with water.

are both invalid; the second answered that the sale is valid while the condition is invalid; and the third answered that both the sale and the condition are valid. Each one of them presented evidence for his own judgment.

Second, it is well-known that there was a big difference between the doctrine of Mâlik and that of Al-Layth, as well as between the doctrines of Ash-Shâfi'î and his Sheikh, Mâlik.

This difference in opinion, of which we have given just brief examples, never affected the relationships among the scholars, since it was based on the Islamic ethics of argument and debate, which include:

1. Avoiding disagreement as far as possible.
2. Keeping to the Book of Allah and the Prophetic *Sunnah.*
3. Considering the give-and-take of any discussion to be an opportunity to help each other.
4. Never attacking others or accusing them of falsehood or ignorance. In advocacy of their opinions, they used very courteous language. Such phrases as "This opinion is better" or "I am not convinced of this" were very usual among them.
5. Committing themselves to piety, integrity and impartiality, and refraining from fanaticism to particular persons.
6. Observing courtesy with those who differ with them, whether alive or dead. For example, Abû Yûsuf performed prayer behind Ar-Rashîd who was cupped, though Abû Yûsuf believed that prayer in the case of being cupped is invalid due to it nullifying one's state of ritual purity.

Also, in his response to the man who asked him about performing prayer behind someone who did not perform ablution after a nosebleed or cupping (which he viewed as breaking one's ablution), Ahmad Ibn Hanbal said, "How can I not perform prayer behind Imâm Mâlik or Sa'îd Ibnul-Musayyab?"

Moreover, Ash-Shâfi'î established prayer next to the grave of Abû Hanîfah and did not perform *Qunût* (i.e. supplications recited in prayer)

As, contrary to his opinion, Abû Hanîfah did not agree about performing *Qunût* in all the prayers.

Also, Mâlik did not agree with the Caliph when he wanted to force people to follow Mâlik's book, *Al-Muwatta'*.

The message of Mâlik to Al-Layth and the latter's response to it are examples of how courteous scholars were when carrying out a conversation. The point in the two messages below illustrates the etiquette of conversation when there is a controversy:

"From Mâlik Ibn Anas

To Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd

Peace be upon you! I praise Allah, the One and Only God, and ask Him to guard you and us inwardly and outwardly so we obey Him and He protects us from all evil. May Allah grant you His grace! It came to my knowledge that you give people *Fatwâs* that contradict with the opinions adopted by the majority of people in our country. You have imamate and superiority among the people of your country, who need you and rely on your opinions. May Allah grant you His grace! Consider what I have written to you, and be aware that the only reason why I have written to you is to give you my advice, for the sake of Allah, and show you my trust in you. So, please consider my writing carefully, and you will know that I spared you no advice.

May Allah help you and us to obey Him and His Messenger in everything and on all occasions! Peace and Mercy of Allah be upon you!"[1]

In his response, Al-Layth wrote, "Peace be upon you! I praise Allah, the One and Only God, and ask Him to guard you and us and to grant us an honorable fate in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. I have gladly received your message in which you mentioned you are in good health. May Allah give you permanent good health, help you thank Him and give you more of His graces! You wrote that you considered the letters that I

(1) 'Iyâd, Tartîb Al-Madârik (Orders of Perceptions), 1/41-43; Ar-Râ'î, Intisâr Al-Faqîr As-Sâlik (Victory of the Poor Traveler), pp. 247-248

sent to you and put your seal on them. I have received these corrected letters; may Allah reward you with good! These messages have been communicated to me from you and I liked to know the truth about them from you. You mentioned that my writings to you, in which I evaluated what I was told about you, were the motivation for you to give me your advice. You wished that I would consider it carefully, and stated that you did not do that before because you had a good opinion about me, but I did not consult you about that and you came to know that I give *Fatwâs* that contradict with the opinions adopted by the majority of people in your country. Indeed, I should worry about myself as long as my people rely on my *Fatwâs*, and all people follow the people of Medina, the destination of the Hegira and where the Qur'ân was sent down. You did right, hopefully, with your writing, and I have studied it as you wished. I hope that Allah may grant you success and prolong your life so that people can benefit from your knowledge. Actually, I fear that people may go astray if a man like you is lost. I appreciate your company, but for the far distance between us. This is my opinion about you and be sure of it. Keep writing to me about yourself, your family and ask me for whatever you, or someone close to you, may need. It will give me great pleasure to help you. At the time I am writing, we are all well and in good health, thanks to Allah! I ask Allah to guide you and us to thank Him for His favors that grace us! Peace and Mercy of Allah be upon you!"[1]

At the end of this chapter, we will discuss a question (that is, raising one's hands in prayer at points other than the opening *Takbîr*[2]) about which the former and present-day scholars disagreed. While the scholars of the past dealt with this controversy open-mindedly and never quarreled with each other (simply because of their wide knowledge and objectivity), the modern scholars have given it exaggerated importance and quarreled with each other severely over it (naturally as a result of their lack of knowledge and their narrow-mindedness).

(1) Ibnul-Qayyim, I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'ûn (Informing Muftis), 3/93-100.

(2) Saying "Allah Akbar" (i.e. Allah is the Greatest) at the beginning of a prayer while raising one's hands.

Ibn 'Abdul-Barr said, "The scholars have paid much attention to this subject. Some of them have exaggerated in censuring those who do not raise their hands. In fact, it need not be given such excessive concern."

It is narrated that Ibnul-Mubârak said, "Once, I performed prayer next to Abû Hanîfah. I raised my hands for the *Rukû'* (i.e. bowing in the prayer) and after standing straight. When I finished my prayer, he said (ironically) to me, 'Did you want to fly?" I said, "Does one who raises his hands for the opening Takbîr want to fly?" He said nothing."[1]

Ibn 'Abdul-Barr quoted from Ahmad Ibn Khâlid, saying, "We had a group of scholars who raised their hands during prayer, following Mâlik's relation of a *Hadîth* narrated by Ibn 'Umar, and another group who raised their hands only for the opening *Takbîr*, acting upon Ibnul-Qâsim's narration (of the same *Hadîth*). The first group never censured the second, nor did the second censure the first."[2]

Recently, on the occasion of opening a new mosque, a person who had reasonable knowledge denied strongly that there were scholars who allowed putting one's right hand over his left hand during the prayer or raising one's hands for the opening *Takbîr*. He claimed that there is not a single authentic narration from the Prophet (PBUH), the Companions, the successors of the Companions or the master *Imâms* to this effect. He said so while he knew well that his claims were wrong. In fact, it is perverted fanaticism that caused him to tell such lies.

As for unreasonable quarrels and hatred resulting from fanaticism, there are many examples in our Islamic community at the present time. The examples that we have presented above are quite sufficient.[3]

Fanaticism that results in making changes in the texts of books according to one's desires is the most dangerous type of fanaticism. It surpasses ordinary fanaticism in that it involves treachery[4]

(1) Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, "*At-Tamhîd*" (Prelude), 9/228-229.

(2) Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, "*Al-Istidhkâr*" (Contemplation), 2/124.

(3) See Muhammad 'Awwâmah, "*Adab Ar-Ra'y*" (Etiquette of Opinion).

(3) Ibid, pp. 77-78

If a person has a fanatic attitude against certain opinions, he can respond either by stating those opinions as they are and then commenting on them or by writing a separate work on the matter. To make changes in a piece of writing about which one does not agree is something that can never be done by a respectable scholar.

Chapter 4

How to Deal with Fanaticism

The problem of fanaticism can only be eliminated by investigating its causes and then prescribing the solutions.

We have already discussed the causes that contribute to the phenomenon. We cited many examples of controversy among the great Muslim scholars which caused no fanatic disputes or violent clashes among them. Fanaticism in Muslim societies has been, and always will be, an abnormal behavior, thus it cannot be used as a norm to judge matters. Anyway, we will offer below some suggestions that can, together, solve the problem of fanaticism. These suggestions are not intended to be implemented all at once. They would be most effective if implemented with a step-by-step approach.

It is worth mentioning that our enemies' fanatic attitudes towards us and our religion are mainly caused by our own actions. We do not concern ourselves dutifully with the *Da'wah* (i.e. calling others to Islam) or the clarification of the Islamic teachings for those who have no knowledge of Islam. Surely, efforts of *Da'wah* are not completely null and void, but they do not rise up to the desired level - for a variety of reasons. When the true image of Islam is made clear, the opponents will realize that Islam does not pay attention to outward appearances and colors; what really count are piety, fear of Allah and fairness with other people.

This is not an imaginary, unrealistic view that cannot be achieved. There actually was a long period when Islam reigned and stretched its wings, under which both Muslims and non-Muslim lived together safely and peacefully. If such a society has already existed, then it can possibly be

brought into existence again if the factors contributing to it are available. Here are some factors of extreme importance in preventing, or at least reducing, fanaticism.

1. **Secure complete freedom in Islam.** The concept of freedom in Islam is completely different from that of the West, whose permissive nature and double standards have been unmasked all over the world. The kind of freedom which we call for is one that ensures the freedom of worship, thought, expression and education for people.

   This sense of freedom is demonstrated in the example below. `Iyâd wrote, "A student of Muhammad Ibn Suhnûn went to a sudatorium in Egypt, administered by a Jewish man. He argued with the Jew (about Islam), but he was defeated because of his lack of knowledge. When Muhammad Ibn Suhnûn traveled to perform *Hajj*, that student accompanied him and told him about the story. When they returned to Egypt, Ibn Suhnûn asked his student to take him to the sudatorium of the Jew.

   Just before Ibn Suhnûn went to the sudatorium, the student preceded him and started discussing with the Jew. Then, Ibn Suhnûn came and discussed with the Jew till the time of the *Zuhr* (i.e. Noon) Prayer was due. He performed it and went back to continue the discussion. The discussion lasted all through the *'Asr* (i.e. Afternoon), Maghrib (i.e. Sunset) and the *'Ishâ'* (i.e. Night) Prayers. Meanwhile, many people congregated and everyone in Egypt knew about the matter, 'The great, Moroccan *Fiqh* scholar is discussing with a Jew'. When the time of the *Fajr* (i.e. Dawn) Prayer was due, the Jew stopped discussing after he had realized the truth, and then he embraced Islam. People cheered and shouted glorifications of Allah. Ibn Suhnûn came out wiping the beads of sweat from his forehead and said to his student, 'May Allah not grant you good! You were very close in causing a tremendous disaster. You discussed with a Jew while you lacked knowledge! If the Jew had won, only Allah knows how many people would have been led astray.'"[1]

(1) `Iyâd, Tartîb Al-Madârik (Orders of Perception), 4/215.

Here, the Jew discussed with absolute freedom and did not receive any threat, so when he was convinced, he embraced Islam. By the same token, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) religion. Verily, the Right path has become distinct from the wrong path..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

It is this environment of freedom within which different sects and even different religions held open debates with each other in Jerusalem and many other places, according to Judge Abû Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabî. This environment only exists under a just ruler from whom the citizens do not fear injustice. Injustice and partiality generate fanaticism, and thus their harm affects the unjust person himself.

2. **Eliminate all kinds of ideological terrorism.** This point is connected with the previous one. Ideological dictatorship produces fanaticism on the two opposite extremes. Many remarkable Muslim scholars experienced ideological terrorism practiced by different parties, for a variety of interests. Examples of this are the case of Imâm Mâlik (who was prevented from giving *Fatwâs* on some questions concerning divorce[1]) and the case of Imâm Ahmad (during the dissension about the creation of the Qur'ân). Other examples include Abû Ishâq At-Tûnisî[2], Al-Bâjî[3], 'Izz Ad-Dîn Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm[4], Ibn Taymiyyah[5], Ash-Shâtibî[6] and many other cases. The situation today is rather worse and despotism is harsher than ever before.

(1) 'Iyâd, Tartîb Al-Madârik (Orders of Perception).

(2) Ibid, 8/59-62.

(3) Al-Bâjî, Tahqîq Al-Madhhab (Doctrine Verification), p. 115-157.

(4) Ibn As-Subkî, Tabaqât Ash-Shâfi'iyyah Al-Kubrâ (the Greatest Rankings of the Shafiite), 8/210.

(5) Ibn Kathîr, Al-Bidâyah Wâ An-Nihâyah (the Beginning and the End), 14/60, p. 156-160.

(6) See Hamzah Abû Fâris, Innovations in Religion and the Attitude of Imâm Al-Shâtibî Towards Them, Al-Muwâfaqât Magazine, the National Higher Institute for Fundamentals of Religion, Algeria, 1st issue, 1992, p. 319-363.

3. Teach different Islamic schools, whether to do with Creed or *Fiqh*.

To teach learners different *Fiqhî* schools, especially in the early stages of education, can prevent fanaticism, providing that they are given information from authentic references written from a supporting, not opposing, point of view.

It may be claimed that when this approach is generally applied to all fields of study, learners will become experts in Islamic disciplines while their original majors do not require such expert knowledge. But, Islamic sciences are not intended to be extensively studied by unspecialized learners. It would be quite sufficient for them to have just a basic knowledge about different Islamic theological sects. However, it is of the utmost importance to teach them the different *Fiqhî* schools. Preferably, learners can study the *Fiqhî* mainstream in their country, and over time, they should be gradually introduced to other *Fiqhî* schools, in an objective, unfanatical manner. Comparative *Fiqh* and Reasons for Differences among *Fiqh* Scholars are two effective subjects that can develop an open-minded mentality among learners.

According to Ibn Suhnûn, many narrow-minded scholars who recognized only one aspect of the truth would begin to change their perceptions when they learn about *Fiqhî* schools other than their *Fiqhî* backgrounds. Instead of using such answers as: "This is the truth!" and "Nothing else can be right!" they would say, "This is a controversial matter among scholars," or "There are different points of view concerning this."

Ash-Shâtibî, may Allah confer mercy upon him, maintained that when a scholar always depends on one single doctrine, this can create a rejection or denial of other doctrines, even without learning about their underlying rationales. This can result in underestimating scholars and Imâms whom all people respect for their virtue, expertise in religion and consideration of the objectives of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*[1].

(1) Ash-Shâtibî, Al-Muwâfaqât Fî Usûl Al-Ahkâm (Agreements about the Fundamentals of Rulings), 3/131-132.

4. **Pay special attention to the ethics of debate.** To eliminate doctrinal fanaticism, ethics of debate should be part of our educational curricula and media program. We should use impressive words and real examples from authentic references, paraphrased in a simpler language to fit the level of understanding of young learners.

   Also, education should include models from the biographies of the authorities of different *Fiqhî* schools, give learners information about their expertise and wide knowledge, focus on how they respected each other, and avoid wrong information propagated by treacherous or ignorant people to falsely defame the honorable scholars. Such curricula should be carefully designed by moderate, open-minded experts who seek to help the Muslim nation.

5. **Advise learners to seek knowledge from Sheikhs and teachers.** Using books as a main source of learning about *Fiqh*, especially in the early stages of education, can result in a lot of misconceptions. Over time, such misconceptions become so deeply rooted in learners' minds that they are taken for granted, while they are just a product of wrong interpretation.

   A few months ago, I was visited by a scholar who was making a *Fiqhî* research for an academic degree. She was so confused because she misunderstood a paragraph written by one Shafiite *Fiqh* scholar. When she tried to include it into her dissertation, she found a contradiction between this paragraph and another citation belonging to the same *Fiqhî* school. When I explained the paragraph and removed its ambiguity, she was able to understand the material and worked out a reconciliation between the two paragraphs.

   More importantly, it is a must to choose competent, trustworthy teachers and mentors. If a teacher himself is not able to explain the *Fiqhî* information, it will be unlikely that learners will advance. We know many professors who supervise and discuss *Fiqhî* researches for M.A. and Ph.D. degrees while they have no acquaintance with *Fiqh*. They are deceived by their qualifications and academic degrees, thinking that certificates make their holder have authority. In fact, there is a wide gap between having a certificate and being a real scholarly researcher.

To put matters right, those thousands of members of teaching boards in our universities should be screened to determine their suitability. To be sure, the Muslim countries vary in this matter, but the overall situation is bad enough.

6. **Teach the Muslim youths that all good is in unity and all evil is in disunity.** Islam strongly advocates unity and warns against disunity. This ideal should be the focus of the efforts of Muslim scholars, especially the masters of *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings). In addition, it should be widely publicized that difference of opinion over subsidiary subjects based on *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion) is a matter of fact, and that it should never affect collective solidarity and support.

7. **Propagate the awareness of the rule that *Fatwâs* are to be handled only by qualified personnel.** A person can give *Fatwâs* only after he becomes qualified and experienced enough to be a Mufti. This entails spending a reasonable number of years learning and studying, which should not be interrupted or carried out hastily.

   When Abû Yûsuf, one of the students of Abû Hanîfah, proceeded to give lectures without permission from his master, Abû Hanîfah sent a man to him whom he had given five questions and their answers. The man went to Abû Yûsuf and asked him the five questions, but he could not answer them. Then, the man told him the true answer for each question. Abû Yûsuf realized that the man was sent by Abû Hanîfah to make him aware that he was not yet qualified enough to undertake *Fatwâs*. Then, he went back to study under Abû Hanîfah, who said the superb comment, "You became like currants before being sour grapes."[1]

   Just as grapes change into currants only after being sour, students are considered scholars only when they have adequate knowledge and experience.[2]

(1) Ibn Nujaym, Al-Ashbâh Wâ An-Nazâ'ir (Analogues and Equivalents), p. 424-425.

(2) Muhammad 'Awwâmah, Safahât Fî Adab Ar-Ra'y (Pages on Etiquette of Opinion), p. 49.

In *Al-Muwatta'* of Mâlik, Abû An-Nadr, the freed slave of `Umar Ibn `Ubaydullah, said that Abû Salamah Ibn `Abdur-Rahmân Ibn `Awf said:

"I asked `Â'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), about what made Ghusl (i.e. ritual bathing) obligatory. She said, 'Do you know what you are like, Abû Salamah? (You are) like a chick when it hears the cocks crowing, it crows with them. When the circumcised part passes the circumcised part, Ghusl becomes obligatory'."[1]

In *Sharh Muwatta' Ibn Mâlik* (Explanation of *Muwatta' Ibn Mâlik*), Al-Bâjî wrote, "Her saying: 'Do you know...' implies two possible meanings. First, Abû Salamah might have still been a child and yet he was asking about sexual intercourse, which he only heard about from others. Thus, he was like a chick which heard the cocks crowing and tried to crow with them, while it was not old enough to do so.

Second, Abû Salamah might have been a child who was not qualified to talk about scholarly subjects but heard elderly, knowledgeable people talking on these subjects and so he imitated them.[2]

8. **Train everyone, whether distinguished scholars or laypersons, on the *Fiqh* of Priorities.** Fields of knowledge vary in importance, and thus they have different levels of priority. Sheikh `Alî At-Tantâwî, may Allah confer mercy upon him, always paid emphatic attention to this point. Much later, I realized the real value of his claims, and knew how intelligent and aware he was of the problems in Muslim's life.

   This paper is not intended to list such priorities in order. Priorities differ from time to time and from one place to another. The only exception is something that is always the top priority: Islamic Faith.

(1) Mâlik, Al-Muwatta', 1/46, the Chapter on Purification, the Section of "Obligation to Do Ghusl When the Two Circumcised Parts Meet".

(2) Al-Bâjî, Al-Muntaqâ (the Selected), 1/96.

I guess, while Allah knows best, that this was the reason why the Prophet (PBUH) gave different answers when different Companions asked him about which deeds were the best. He (PBUH) was aware of the personal weakness in each one of them, so he focused first on that weakness, knowing that all the other components of their personalities were irreproachable.

It makes sense if this principle is applied both to the prominent scholars and laypeople. A scholar has to give those who have no special knowledge the most needed facts rather than the less important information. On the other hand, a layperson has to realize the necessity of seeking knowledge of the most critical issues in religion first. Accordingly, it is accredited as a scientific rule that "the rulings related to *Zakâh* should not be learnt by those for whom *Zakâh* is not obligatory; the rulings of Fasting should not be learnt before its time is due; and the rituals of *Hajj* should not be learnt by those who cannot perform it".

9. **Engage the Muslim youths in the concerns of the nation.** This rule is related to the *Fiqh* of Priorities. For example, if a disbeliever tries to kill a Muslim, you have to promptly save the Muslim first, if you can do so, not preach to him about how to perform an action of the Prayer correctly, for example!

   In this category there are many disputes among scholars, or even learners, on controversial issues about which they have different points of view. At the same time, they do not responsd to the oppression practiced against Muslims, whether from other Muslims or from non-Muslims.

   Similarly, you may find a person wasting a lot of time and effort in discussing an optional matter and trying hard to find out its most probable ruling, while he does not orientate himself to his basic job which may improve or protect Muslims' lives.

   In a radio interview, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî, may Allah confer mercy upon him, mentioned that he met a Muslim pharmacist who was a fervent supporter of Islam. The man was having a heated

discussion with another man about a supererogatory part of the Prayer. When he saw the Sheikh, he was delighted and asked him to give his opinion about the issue. Obviously, the man hoped that the Sheikh would advocate his point of view. The Sheikh asked him, "Are you a Muslim who likes good for all Muslims?" He answered an emphatic, 'Yes.' The Sheikh said, "Then, give this discussion up. Focus only on your job and find out if the medicines you buy are effective and fitting for human consumption or not. When you do so, you will be doing Muslims a very great favor. You had better refer this issue you are discussing to the competent scholars."

Historically, the Andalusian scholars sent a man to Tunisia to ask Ibn `Arafah Al-Warghamî about the verdict on the supplications said by an Imâm after prayer. Ten years later, people of Sala (a town in Morocco) did the same. Astonishingly, they did so while their enemies were threatening their countries and had already seized some parts of the Islamic state.

10. **Use every possible way to disseminate moderation.** It is by means of this policy that fanaticism can be successfully eliminated. All the aforementioned guidelines can contribute to this goal.

    Moderation here is not intended to mean the adoption of deviant claims which contradict Islam itself. Moderation involves the adherence to the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* as understood by the majority of Muslim scholars. This is a complicated topic on which many books have been written. It is quite enough, for the purpose of this paper, to highlight its utmost importance.

11. **Teach Muslims how to follow the truth, whatever it may be.** It was stated above that one of the causes of fanaticism is that a Muslim may believe that a particular scholar is always right, taking his opinions as the one and only truth, and disparaging other opinions as falsehoods. Therefore, he will accept knowledge only from that single scholar.

    So, if doctrinal fanaticism is to be terminated, all the educational curricula, media materials, public and exclusive magazines, newspapers and the publications of special institutions (such as

Endowment Departments, Islamic Universities, etc.) should seek to shape a Muslim who acknowledges whatever is right and abandons blind imitation. All the sincere proponents of the Islamic *Sharī'ah* should dedicate their optimal efforts to this goal. The leaders of Muslim countries should provide the finances and take the policies that can create an objective, Muslim environment.

12. **Enable the real scholars to address and educate the youths** without dictatorial control from the government. The youths have no trust in the "official" scholars, who are just implementing the agendas of the authorities and do not express their own opinions. Such "government mouthpieces" have lost their credibility and their rhetoric can no longer influence the general public.

Finally, this is a very broad topic that reflects a real problem in the Muslim community. This chapter deals with just some headlines of the topic, which needs future, more in-depth scrutiny.



Family Violence

An Introduction to Understand the Phenomenon and the Means to Avoid It



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Family violence is a dangerous, destructive phenomenon that has not developed in our societies without a cause. Rather, it is a result of a deviant or distorted culture absorbed on a wide scale by different strata within our Muslim communities to the extent that it has become intertwined with our original culture and a part of it. Additionally, those responsible for allowing this culture to be adopted have often cloaked it in the garment of religious commitment, alleging that they are acting for the benefit of the Muslim community.

Introduction

Without exception and in spite of their different specialties and inclinations, researchers agree that family violence is a pathological phenomenon that is the result of the loss of reason and blindly following whims and vain desires. They also agree that balanced individuals who consider the consequences of their actions beforehand are neither inclined to violence, nor accepting it as an option and do not promote it under any circumstances.

In spite of the consensus on the criminal aspect of this phenomenon and in spite of the fact that those who indulge in it are usually described with the worst or least flattering of attributes, we find that it is, nonetheless, increasing and becoming more and more prevalent. Such a paradox raises questions.

For instance, are modern societies afflicted by some sort of chronic disease causing them to incline to family violence in the same way that one might expect them to incline to peace and mercy, in spite of it being a criminal act?

Have the complex circumstances surrounding the modern family led to the promotion of violence?

Is there any confusion between that which constitutes violence and that which constitutes legal disciplining that may have led to the omission of the term violence or merged the first term with the second?

It is necessary to both consider and find convincing answers to such questions if we are to thoroughly understand this dangerous phenomenon and eradicate it. The purpose of this study will, therefore, be to answer these questions by discussing the nature of violence, its prevalence, its dimensions and also the reasons leading to it and ways of treating it.

Family Violence.. The Term and Its Meaning

Violence, linguistically, is the physical force exerted for the purpose of damaging or hurting other people. It is considered to be the opposite of gentleness.

Terminologically, it is defined as behavior that aims to harm others. This includes physical harm, insults or verbal attacks, and the destruction of property. It is also defined as a form of violation that has emotional effects in addition to the physical harm it causes. Violence is also one of the most important problems surrounding psychological health.[1]

Linguistically, a family is a group of people consisting of a father, a mother and their offspring.

Terminologically, the family is the first fundamental social unit that aims to preserve the human race and is one of the fundamental factors that make up the educational entity. The family is also the seed of the society and its natural, essential cell[2].

In Islam, the family springs from marriage, which is the legally declared relationship between a man and woman, resulting in mutual rights and obligations. The family, in Islam, starts with the immediate unit that consists of father, mother and children and extends to the large extended family where even the father, mother, siblings, paternal uncles and aunts, maternal uncles and aunts and their children form only a single part of it.

Family violence can be defined as the illegal use of force or the threat of using it for the purpose of subjecting a family member to the rule of the one who wishes to impose his will through violence so as to cause physical, moral or psychological harm.

(1) See The Role of Education in Fighting Violence and Extremist Crimes by 'Azzah Fat̲hî 'Alî, published in the book of researches of the international conference: Social Sciences and their Role in Fighting Violence and Extremist Crimes in the Muslim Societies (Cairo: Publications of Al-Azhar University, 1998) 4/110.

(2) See (How Islam Organizes the Society) by Mu̲hammad Abû Za̲hrah (Cairo: Al-Fikr Al-'Arabî publishing house), p. 18. See also (How Islam Constructs the Society) by A̲hmad Mu̲hammad Al-'Assâl (Kuwait: Al-Qalam publishing house) p. 143.

Forms and Types of Family Violence

Violence is a complex topic due to its various forms, causes and dimensions. For this reason, sociologists have divided it into such categories as family violence, academic violence, media-related violence, political violence...etc. With regards to its effects, they have divided it into three kinds: physical violence, verbal violence and psychological violence.

Family violence, one of the most dangerous kinds of violence practiced in the society, is that which happens within the family institution and among its members. It includes violence that takes place between spouses, violence perpetrated by parents against their children, and violence carried out by children against one another or against the elderly. Such violence may take many different forms, the most destructive of which are:

- Physical abuse, including battering, imprisonment and expulsion.
- Sexual abuse, such as sexual molestation and rape.
- Emotional or verbal abuse such as blaspheming and insulting.

The Scale of the Phenomenon of Family Violence and Its Consequences

A world survey of the phenomenon of violence reveals that it is both spreading and rising. In 2001, global statistics showed that one of every three women had experienced sexual, physical or emotional abuse in her life.[1] Further, the American Senate declared that physical violence and sexual abuse cost the American treasury more than 5.8 billion dollars annually[2].

In 2000, UNICEF reported that the proportion of women and girls who experience family violence ranges from 20 to 50%. It also declared that about 60 million women have died throughout the world due to family violence. UNICEF also reported that the number of countries taking precautions to face violence against women and girls does not exceed 44[3].

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(1) See the report of "Ending Violence against Woman" organization, edsum.shtml 11 http://www.inforforhealth.org/pr/1.

(2) See http://www.infoforhealth.org.

(3) See the UNICEF report for 2000, htm45pr00http://www.unicef.org/newsline/

With regards to our Arab and Muslim societies, surveys show that the phenomenon of violence is also spreading and rising to the extent that it has become common, mutual behavior between spouses, parents and children, siblings, children and the elderly, and grandfathers and grandmothers. It has also spread among both the educated and uneducated classes, as well as among the rich and the poor.

A study published by the Research National Center in Cairo on the forms of violence practiced against women, showed that family violence is one of the most common forms of violence practiced against women in the Egyptian society, regardless of whether they are mothers, wives or daughters. The study also proved that such violence comes in different forms such as battering, mistreatment, sarcasm, mockery, the threat of harm and punishment, and the continuous threat of divorce(1).

Another study carried out by the Bureau of Crime Prevention in the Saudi Ministry of Interior confirms the spread of the phenomenon of child maltreatment in the Saudi society in general, reporting that 45% of Saudi children are subjected to harm one way or another in their daily lives(2).

The question that raises itself is: Why are we, as individuals as well as educational and social institutions, not giving the problem its due care in spite of its prevalence and intensity in the society?

The answer to this question lies in the following four points:

1. The Nature of The Problem Itself

Because family problems are usually confidential, discussing them is, in itself, a sensitive matter. Indeed, they are usually emphatically concealed and withheld.

This fact is clearly understood when considering the following results of a study carried out in 1991 by the National Union of Tunisian Women on spousal violence. The study showed that 51.8% of the women who experience violence complain to the family, 3.9% complain to police stations, 3.5% complain to the courts and 4.1%

(1) See Al-Farhah magazine, No. 87, December 2003, p. 26.

(2) See htm01/socity/socity04-04-2004http://www.alwatan.com.sa/daily/

complain to social guides. National Malaysian statistics carried out in 1989 revealed that about 1.8 million women over 15 - i.e. about 39% of this age category - have experienced battering by their husbands or friends (of the victim) while only 909 of them made official reports to the police[1].

Such statistics reflect just how confidential and sensitive family problems are.

2. The Cultural Legality Granted to Family Violence

Violent behavior against wives and children is socially accepted within some family circles. Indeed, it is even thought of as a means of discipline. Because of this, wives and children are actually susceptible to criticism and rebuke if they report being harmed, as society has come to see violence as a disciplinary standard and the discipliner as a righteous man who seeks the welfare of his wife and children. The nature of a man's duty to protect his family, and the burden of responsibility and guardianship are sometimes seen as reasons that necessitate harsh behavior or severity in order to guarantee order within the family and to guarantee the family's wellbeing.

3. Lack of Statistics and Data Revealing the Scale of the Phenomenon of Family Violence

Available statistics do not reflect the true weight of the problem as they merely represent the cases reported. Cases that go unreported, for social reasons, are many times more those which are documented. Moreover, available statistics lack accuracy and objectivity since they rely only on police reports or documents from other official institutions that receive reports of crimes committed within the family. Furthermore, service and social institutions like hospitals and schools do not make a record of cases of violence, such as battering, committed against children and wives unless such cases are legally incriminated[2].

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(1) See http://www.wao.org.my/research.htm#domestic

(2) Family Violence, by Iglâl Ismâ'il Hilmî (Cairo: Qubâ' publishing house, edition: 1999) p. 142.

4. The Denial of Such Violence

While this is a reason in itself, it is also a natural result of the previous points. The view that family violence is something that should be kept private within the individual families, that it is regarded culturally legal and a form of discipline, and the lack of statistics that shed light on the prevalence of the phenomenon have all led many people in our Arab and Muslim societies to regard cases of family violence as exceptions, and that the issue itself does not rise to the level of a social phenomenon. Consequently, it is regarded as something that does not deserve the tremendous concern allocated to it by the psychologists and sociologists who research it.

Perhaps what is more worrying with regards to this issue is not so much the scale of the phenomenon, but its repercussions. Family violence hinders the proper functioning of the family, which is, itself, the first and most fundamental brick in the structure of a society and the first step in the renaissance of nations and civilizations. For this reason, Islam laid down fundamentals and guidelines to protect the Muslim family from this phenomenon:

a. Emotional Stability

This is what is meant by the Qur'anic verse in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought."}

[Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 21]

Allah, Exalted be He, also says:

{"It is He Who created you from one soul and created from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her..."}

[Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 189]

These two Qur'anic verses clarify the features and foundations of emotional stability and that the family is responsible for providing emotional stability, security and protection for all its members, especially the juveniles.

The family is also the most able section of a society to carry out this task since it receives the child at the onset of his life and raises him in its embrace before allowing him to have contact with the outside world.

The prevalence of love and affability between parents and children has a profound effect on the soundness of their psychological development and the formation of their emotional personalities. Deactivating this dimension or role exposes children to psychological and behavioral disorders that may have dangerous repercussions.

b. Social Upbringing

The family is the base of the society not only for its biological function, but also for the fact that it is the source of sound morals and manners, the first pillar of behavioral discipline, and the place where a person takes his first lessons in social life[1]. This is primarily because the family is the first step in the process of social upbringing which may be defined as "a process of learning, instructing and educating that is built on social interaction and aims at instilling individuals with appropriate manners, standards and attitudes. It also aims at providing individuals with certain social roles so that they may adapt to social life easily."[2] If the family is unable to develop such positive interaction between individuals and their societies by behavioral discipline and the infusion of constructive communication skills that will allow them to communicate with others, there will develop a generation of individuals with aggressive tendencies who are only capable of intellectual terrorism and physical violence.

(1) Studies in Family Sociology, by Mûsâ Abû Hawsah, Jordon: books published by the Head of The Department of Scientific Research, Jordanian University, 2001.

(2) Sociological Psychology, by Hâmid Zahrân (Cairo: 'Âlam Al-Kutub publishing house, 1984) p. 244.

Causes of Family Violence

The phenomenon of family violence is associated with educational, cultural, social and economic factors. It is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon that cannot be explained in the light of only one single factor or cause. Indeed, there are many different, sometimes contradicting, theories that attempt to explain or justify the phenomenon of violence. Since the scope of this study is not to discuss these theories, we will focus only on the core causes of violence, presenting, as much as possible, the complete cultural, educational, social and economic climates within which the phenomenon occurs. The researcher may outline the most important core reasons for violence as follows:

The First Reason: The Domination of the Culture of Violence

A primary reason for why violence has dominated our society lies in the insufficient or distorted understanding of religion and the deep-rooted thoughts and traditions that bolster the view of women as being inferior.

It also lies in the pre-Islamic view of the nature of the relationship between the male and female as being restricted to a relationship of possession and enslavement. Worse than this view is the misinterpretation of some Prophetic traditions. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"If I were to command anyone to prostrate before another, I would command women to prostrate themselves before their husbands."*
>
> [Related by At-Tirmidhî, who judged it as Hasan (good) *Gharîb* (single) *Hadîth*]

He (PBUH) also said:

> *"Treat women kindly, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved part of the rib is its upper part, so if you should try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain curved. So treat women kindly."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bukhârî]

Another *Hadîth* in which he (PBUH) said:

"I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you (women). O women, some of you can lead a cautious, wise man astray."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim]

Also, he (PBUH) said:

"After me (my death), I will have not left any affliction more harmful to men than women."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

Many weak-minded individuals interpret such *Hadîths* (Prophetic traditions) as a right to dominate, tyrannize and practice violence against women, whether they are wives, daughters or sisters.

So at the level of marital life, for instance, the current culture has eliminated rights from the charter of the marriage relationship and has only left, indeed intensified and extended, duties to include tolerance for personal temperaments or moods and cultural legacies. Such a culture has ignored many other *Hadîths* that put the previously mentioned *Hadîths* in their proper context as they call for respect of wives by being benevolent to them and discourage resorting to hitting.

For instance, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to his family."

[Related by At-Tirmidhî, who judged it as *Hasan* (good) *Sahîh* (authentic) *Hadîth*]

He (PBUH) also said:

"None of you should flog his wife as he flogs a slave and then have sexual intercourse with her at the end of the day."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on Marriage]

'Â'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her), referring to the Prophet's manners, said:

"Allah's Messenger (PBUH) never beat a slave, a woman or anything with his hand."

[Related by Ibn Mâjah]

Fâtimah Bint Qays (may Allah be pleased with her) reported that when she mentioned to the Prophet (PBUH) that both Mu'âwiyah Ibn Abû Sufyân and Abû Jahm proposed to her, He (PBUH) said:

"As for Abû Jahm, he does not put down his staff from his shoulder (in a narration by Muslim: As for Abû Jahm, he beats women.) As for Mu'âwiyah, he is a poor man with no property. Marry Usâmah." So she married him, and Allah blessed their marriage, and she was happy (in her marriage).

[Related by Muslim]

Such *Hadîths* illustrate the manner in which the Prophet (PBUH) treated and behaved towards his family. Ibnul-Qayyim, in his book "*Zâd Al-Mi'âd Fî Hady Khayr Al-'Ibâd* (The Provisions for the Appoint (next life) Obtained from the Dealings of the Best Servant [Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)]", summarized this manner well when he said, "...and the way in which he (PBUH) treated his wives represented or epitomized an honorable way of life and honorable manners. He, the Prophet (PBUH), would say:

"The best of you is he who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to his family."

Such *Hadîths* also show that beating or hitting wives is not permissible, except in very limited, exceptional situations.

The distorted culture we have adopted has also rooted the principle of tyranny in the relationship between parents and their children so that some have mistakenly come to believe that since a child is one's son or daughter, he or she is property that one may treat in any way they please.

This understanding is further aggravated through the further misinterpretation of *Hadîths*, such as the Prophet's (PBUH) saying:

"Command your children to pray when they become seven years old, and beat them for it (i.e., not performing prayer) when they become ten years old; and arrange their beds (to sleep) separately."

[Related by Abû Dâwûd]

Some short-sighted individuals have inferred from this *Hadîth* the absolute legality of hitting, and that it is a praiseworthy action in an absolute sense, forgetting that children are a trust and that they must be protected in a manner that lies in accordance with Allah's decrees. Such individuals have also ignored many Prophetic traditions that illustrate the nature of sound family relationships, such as the Prophet's (PBUH) saying:

"Whoever does not revere our elders, show mercy to our children or recognize the right of our scholars is not of us (i.e., not a true Muslim)."

[Related by Ahmad and At-Tabarânî]

Also, As-Sâ'ib Ibn Yazîd narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) kissed Al-Hasan in the presence of Al-Aqra' Ibn Habis. He, Al-Aqra' Ibn Habis, admired this and said, "I have ten children but I have never kissed any of them." The Prophet (PBUH) replied by saying:

"Allah will not be merciful to those who are not merciful to people."

[Related by Al-Hâkim in his Mustadrak]

It is also narrated that Al-Hasan climbed the back of the Prophet (PBUH) while he was prostrating (during prayer), and he (PBUH) took longer prostrating, so (after he finished the prayer) he (PBUH) said:

"I disliked to rise up from the prostration until he (Al-Hasan) was no longer interested in riding (on my back)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim]

Also, the Prophet (PBUH) used to pray while carrying Umamah Bint Zaynab: when he prostrated, he would put her down, and when he got up, he would carry her.

[Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim]

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

"Whoever has three daughters, and shows patience with them and provides them with food, drink and clothing from his own hard work, they will be a screen for him from the Hellfire on the Day of Resurrection."

[Related by Ahmad and Ibn Mâjah]

These *Hadîths* prove that resorting to beating is a purely exceptional state and that it is not a means of retaliation against children; it is only resorted to when all other means have been exhausted and if the father is sure that it will serve a benefit. It is also important to take into consideration that beating must not be painful or tormenting.

Such a distorted culture has, unfortunately, found supporters who have embraced it and regarded its axioms as dogmatic facts that are unquestionable. Worse than this, such a culture has taken it upon itself to legalize and embed the use of violence by accustoming women and children to accept it and submit to it, which in turn has encouraged those who practice or resort to violence to persist.

The Second Reason: Family Education

Violence is not a natural instinct and no one can be said to be violent or aggressive in nature. Rather, violence is an acquired mannerism that is learned throughout the different stages of life through acquired social standards and attitudes(1). Because the family is the first step in the process of social upbringing, it is the violence a child learns or experiences at an early, fundamental stage within the family that instills within him the tendency to be violent. Violent children are either direct victims of violent actions practiced against them within their family environment or victims of erroneous education methods that adopt and teach violence as a way of communicating with others. Both situations infuse children with violent mannerisms that result in children practicing violence after having been victims of it. When a child's mother, for instance, is continually mistreated by the father, a male child will grow accustomed to showing no respect for women and to treating them violently or harshly.

(1) Family Violence, by Iglâl Ismâ'îl Hilmî, p. 17.

The most outstanding characteristic of violence in family education is its dependence on a series of different physical and emotional penalties, such as hitting, sarcasm, mockery, blaspheming and reproaching, when attempting to implant social standards or values.

This means of education has negative impacts on a child's character and psychology since it harms, at a fundamental level, his dignity and moral feelings. It also prevents a child from achieving the intended educational goals and serves only to expand the unquestionable parental authority he is subjected to.

An analytical study of the phenomenon of family violence asserts that the adoption of violence as a means of education in some family circles is a result of various psychological, social and cultural reasons. Identifying and understanding these reasons is undoubtedly very beneficial when prescribing a treatment for the problem.

Some of the most important reasons include:

1. The parents' ignorance of the impact of violence on their children's psychology and character.
2. The parent's repetition of the same erroneous methods they were brought up with and the application of these methods to their children. Indeed, very often the violent manner with which a parent treats his child is a reflection of the way in which they themselves were treated when they were children.
3. The incorrect belief that using violence as a means of education is the easiest and most effective way of imposing discipline and instilling obedience.
4. The lack of educational awareness of how to deal with children in accordance with an appropriate educational methodology.

In the light of these points, it becomes important to stress that violence is not a means of education for the following important reasons:

1. Although punishment can help in improving discipline and obedience, it is only a temporary measure and not a decisive solution. The excessive use of parental authority only serves to reduce a child's

sense of self-supervision so that he fears immediate punishment and his parent's authority when it is present but he does not have much regard for that authority when it is absent[1].

2. The violence used in upbringing, especially the beating of children, often occurs when one parent is angry or under stress and feels the urgent need to vent out these feelings. Such violence, of course, is not a result of balanced contemplation designed to achieve certain educational goals.

3. Violence Used for Disciplinary Measures causes psychological and intellectual difficulties.

   Psychological difficulties may include the child becoming accustomed to being the subject of physical or emotional violence, which in turn leads to different forms of disability, introversion and apathy as the most outstanding characteristics of a child's personality.

   Also, at a psychological level, it may have the opposite effect and produce a personality that is characterized by the love of tyranny and revenge, since the oppressive means of upbringing that include sarcasm and mocking tend to provoke feelings of spite and hatred, and a tendency to use force in order to be free of the oppression a child is subjected to.

   Many studies have proven that children who are treated cruelly or violently in their childhood attempt to avenge themselves when they grow older by committing violent crimes, inclining to rebel against parental authority or any symbol of authority in general[2].

(1) See Alienation and Tendency towards Violence, socio psychological study, p. 134, by 'Abdul-Mukhtâr Muhammad Khidr.

(2) See "A Critical Study of the Research into Violence and Extremism Performed in the Arab world, especially Egypt" by Ramadân 'Abdul-Sattâr and Ilhâm 'Abdur-Rahmân Khalîl, published in the book of researches of the international conference: Social Sciences and their Role in Fighting Violence and Extremist Crimes in the Muslim Societies (Cairo: Printings of Al-Azhar University, 1998) 4/110. See also "Alienation and Tendency towards Violence, a Socio Psychological Study", p. 69, 126, by 'Abdul-Mukhtâr Muhammad Khidr.

Ibn Khaldûn summarized the destructive effects of violence as a disciplinary measure in an insightful article included in a chapter entitled "Practising violence against students is harmful to them" saying, "Anyone raised by the use of violence and oppression, whether student or servant, will be inclined towards being oppressive. He will become easily agitated and prone to laziness, lying and resorting to slyness or cunning as a means of defense lest anyone becomes violent against him. Indeed, cunning and deception will be fundamental to his character. He will also lose the human qualities that allow him to be a healthy part of the society and contribute to civilization for he will have no pride, nor will he find any motivation to defend himself or his home, ultimately becoming a parasite, expecting others to do these actions for him. He will lack the motivation to gain virtues and good manners, ultimately coming to a spiritual standstill in terms of personal goals, while his sense of humanity will slip to ever lower levels.(1)"

The intellectual difficulties a child experiences are manifested in his lack of ability to be innovative or creative. Socio-educational studies prove that children who belong to social circles in which dialogue and respect for the opinions of others prevail tend to be successful and excel in education. Such studies also stress that violence in education robs a person of his character and human attributes, and also extinguishes the flame of intellect and the ability to innovate(2).

In spite of the appalling distortions using violence as a disciplinary measure causes to the human character, it is important to emphasize that Islamic educational thought and the theories of modern psychology do not deny the principle or benefits of punishment in the educational process. They do, however, limit the use of punishment with a group of conditions and restrictions that prevent it from being the first or only line of action to strengthen positive behavior or eradicate negative mannerisms. Rather, punishment is only resorted to after the means of reward, such as praise or encouragement and incentives, have failed.

(1) See "The Introduction" by Ibn Khaldûn (Nahḏit Miṣr publishing house).

(2) See "Educational Terror" by Watfah 'Alî, Al-'Arabî Magazine, Kuwait, No. 460.

In explaining one approach of disciplining children, Abû Hâmid Al-Ghazâlî mentioned, ".... The child must be honored and rewarded whenever he or she shows good manners and does praiseworthy actions. Should the child do something wrong for the first time, he should be forgiven and his action overlooked. Also, we should not let him know that we know about whatever he has done, especially if he has tried hard to hide it. The reason for this is that exposing a child's misdemeanor causes him to become more daring in doing that which is wrong in front of people. Should the child relapse and fall into doing that which is wrong again, he should be punished secretly, rebuked and warned not to do what he has done again lest he be seen by others and embarrassed by his actions."[1]

Although Al-Ghazâlî admits to the principle of punishment as a secondary means of treatment, he warns us of its repetition, since repetition is something that deprives punishment of its ability to deter as it accustoms a child to it. He explains, "Do not continually admonish a child so that he does not become accustomed to being reprimanded and does not begin to feel unruffled by the fact that he has done something shameful, and so that words of reproach do not become ineffective."[2]

The Third Reason: Societal Factors

The increase in the rate of family violence cannot be isolated from the difficult conditions and the severe influences that families in our Muslim and Arab societies continue to experience due to social, political and economic transformations. High unemployment rates, inequality in job opportunities, political marginalization - that leads individuals to feel as though they have no role in making the political decisions through which their living conditions are determined - and being subjected to political violence, such as that which uses or threatens to use power to achieve political goals, are clear examples of such difficult conditions.

(1) See "Renewing Religious Sciences" by Abû Hâmid Al-Ghazâlî, the second edition (Beirut: Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyya Publishing House), 3/65.

(2) The previous reference.

All such conditions that surround an individual at work and that are a part of an individual's economic and political life lead to emotional charges that erupt within the limits of the family, as the family is regarded as a safe haven within which an individual can express feelings of anger and objection. Such circumstances have a negative impact on marriages and the lives of children, especially with regards to their social and psychological development.

While the political and economy-related types of violence are not direct causes of family violence, the conflicts and psychological pressures accompanying economic deterioration and political dictatorship affect family members and hence play an important role in bringing about family violence. So, unlike cultural and educational factors, political and economic violence are not a main factor in family violence but something that aggravates it and feeds it.

Mechanisms to Avoid the Phenomenon of Family Violence

As mentioned, family violence is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It cannot be dealt with through the mere use of rhetoric, advice and directives. Rather, in order for this phenomenon to be overcome, a practical program needs to be implemented in which instructional, educational and religious institutions as well as social and juristic organizations and the media make significant efforts to, first, limit this phenomenon and then treat its negative impacts on both the individual and society.

As a social phenomenon, family violence can be treated at two levels: theoretical and practical.

1. The Treatment of Family Violence at the Theoretical Level

Changes in mannerisms and practices begin when individuals change the thoughts that lay behind these mannerisms by breaking down culturally accepted barriers and changing the misconceptions that have led to the legalization of family violence and the entrenchment of its culture in the subconscious of those who practice it. This can be accomplished by:

a. Spreading the correct understanding of Islam with regards to the nature of the relationship between men and women

Such a relationship is built on two main pillars:

The First Pillar: observing the limits set by Allah, Glory be to Him, within the marriage in obedience to Allah's order as stated in His Qur'ân as follows:

He, Exalted be He, says:

{"...These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers (i.e. the unjust)."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 229]

Allah also says:

{"...These are the limits (set by) Allah, so do not approach them..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 187]

In another verse, He says:

{"...And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself..."} [At-Talâq (Divorce): 1]

The Second Pillar: Living with wives in an honorable way: This is what is meant in the following two Qur'anic verses. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And live with them in kindness..."} [An-Nisâ' (Women): 19]

Also, He, Exalted be He, says:

{"...Then [after that], either keep (her) in an acceptable manner or release (her) with good treatment..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 229]

The acceptable manner in the marriage-tie is that which pious people have come to regard as a factor which constitutes an honorable way of life and good mannerisms. Al-Ghazâlî provides a good description of how a husband should treat his wife by stating, "Understand that treating your wife with good manners does not only mean refraining

from hurting her but also bearing the harm she does to you and being patient with her when she gets nervous or angry, so that you may be one who follows the example of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). It is narrated that the Prophet's wives might have disobeyed his orders and deserted him for a whole day. 'Âishah, may Allah be pleased with her, narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) once said to her:

"I know when you are angry and when you are pleased." "I, 'Âishah, said, 'How do you know that, Allah's Messenger?' He said, 'When you are pleased, you say, 'Yes, by the lord of Muhammad,' but when you are angry, you say, 'Yes, by the lord of Ibrâhîm (Abraham)!' I said, 'Yes, I do not omit (anything) except your name.'"

[Related by Al-Bukhâri, Chapter on Good Manners]

b. Implementing a system of Islamic values that organizes the relationships within the family

Such a system should encourage cordiality, mercy, communication, tolerance, advice, cooperation as well as many other Qur'anic and Prophetic values. It must also be applied to, or implemented within, our families so that family violence may be replaced by family happiness.

Dialogue is possibly the most important requirement needed to achieve proper communication between an individual and his family and something that must be instilled so that proper communication may take place. A personality that tends to carry out dialogues greatly reflects its ability to interact with others at cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels, making dialogue the most important value needed for the sound development of individual family members. Through dialogue, one may guarantee the success of three factors necessary for the family unity: communication, understanding and harmony. The actualization of these three allows us to settle differences and disputes and turn incidents that normally cause division into opportunities for strengthening family unity.

Establishing an atmosphere of effective dialogue within the family requires that some connotations regarding the nature of dialogue be modified. It is important to correct misconceptions that associate

dialogue with a weakness in character and the inability to confront others. Such misconceptions dictate that strength and bravery are only a feature of those who ascribe themselves to the Pharaonic method of communication. Allah, Glory be to Him, mentions, in His Qur'ân, that Pharaoh claimed:

{"...Pharaoh said, 'I do not show you except what I see, and I do not guide you except to the way of right conduct."}

[Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 29]

From a psychological perspective, it is violence that reflects a form of weakness since it is the last means of communication resorted to when one has failed in persuading others using dialogue.

Violence also represents a form of mental inadequacy, i.e. that the person practicing it lacks a full understanding of a particular situation. It indicates that an individual is incapable of functioning properly and lacks the ability to solve problems or face difficulties creatively.

2. The Treatment of Family Violence at a Practical, Field Level

The practical, field level is extremely vast and may have drastic effects. It can be divided into different initiatives within different categories as follows:

1. The Level of Juristic Legislation:

- To set up special courts dealing with cases of family violence so that family differences may be settled quickly and so that the sensitivity and privacy of such problems may be respected and maintained.
- To enact clear legislation and deterrent laws to prevent more family violence as well as the enactment of protective laws to contain family violence and take precautions against it.

2. The Level of Official Institutions:

- To set up a national center to protect families from violence. This center would be accountable for following up family violence-related problems, handling cases and dealing with the symptoms that relate to family violence, and then making reports and statistical studies stating the findings. This center should also develop a national, practical strategy in dealing with cases of family violence in accordance

with directives from specialized circles including state institutions, research centers in universities and civil society associations to prevent the continued spread of the phenomenon of family violence.

- To set up a center to care for family violence victims for the period in which investigations and treatment take place. Such a center should care, primarily, for those whose cases are severe such as victims of sexual aggression, severe cases of battering, victims of torture and attempted homicide.
- To establish centers for social and psychological care. These centers should employ a number of specialists in the fields of psychology, psychological health and social service that can help parents to treat their children's psychological and behavioral problems.

3. The Academic Level:

- Holding meetings to discuss the phenomenon. Such meetings must be attended by those who are concerned with the different aspects of the phenomenon, including representatives from different sectors of psychological and social care centers, ministries of education and health as well as charitable organizations. These meetings must aim at making a link between academic studies and the field work so that they can provide an effective prescription for the phenomenon and make suitable recommendations for dealing with it so that abstract theoretical discussions may be avoided.
- To conduct comprehensive field studies that cover all forms of family violence instead of just focusing on one form, as is the case with most available studies, such as wife-beating or the physical abuse of children and the violence perpetrated against them. Limiting studies to just one kind of family violence does not help in explaining and analyzing other different kinds of family violence. The studies must be conducted using large samples representing the whole society, taking into account its varied classes and categories. Most family violence-related studies do not lead to any general rules and are not conclusive as they are often carried out using small samples or depend on individual reports, thereby lacking accuracy and objectivity.

- To carry out research projects in which researchers specialized in different sciences like sociology, psychology, law and medicine may collaborate to study the phenomenon from all sides.

4. The Level of Civil Society Institutions:

- To set up centers, projects and programs for family guidance and to provide youth intending to marry with the required emotional, mental and psychological maturity as well as to teach them necessary skills to promote a stable family life. Such skills include effective communication between the spouses and the skills of negotiation and problem solving.
- To launch programs for family rehabilitation by teaching the basis of successful family relations, as well as training and providing individuals with psychological and social skills, self-discipline, the ability to control emotions and settle disputes, the capacity to listen to the needs of others and to care for them, negotiation skills, dialogue skills and anything else that may help families settle disputes and take advantage of problems to strengthen the ties among the different family members. Such programs are bound to produce good examples of sound and healthy family relationships.
- To develop educational awareness of the family by presenting scientific programs that can help parents understand the psychology of their children, teach them the basics of a balanced education, give them methods for dealing with their children's problems and provide them with ways to discover their talents and ways of developing them further.

5. The Level of the Media:

- Because the media is one of the most important institutions that play a role in the process of upbringing and in shaping the values of a society, it is essential that it warns people of the social dangers of family violence. In this manner the media can make major contributions towards explaining to people the reasons behind family violence, warning people of its dangers and determining ways to contain it and treat its effects.

- The media is also capable of refuting Western cultural values which have aimed to set-up a new understanding of the concept of the family and its role, and then aimed to establish this idea within Arab societies. Capitalist regimes have been trying to spread such a view throughout the Muslim world, attempting to substitute it for the existing Islamic values by taking advantage of the modern media revolution.

Summary

Family violence is a dangerous, destructive phenomenon that has not developed in our societies without a cause. Rather, it is a result of a deviant and distorted culture which has been absorbed at a wide scale level by different strata within our Muslim communities to the extent that it has become intertwined with our own culture and a part of it. Additionally, those responsible for allowing this culture to be adopted have often cloaked it in the garment of religious commitment and alleged to be acting for the benefit of the Muslim community. It is also a result of erroneous upbringing methods within families who adopt violence as a means of rearing and education. Moreover, certain social, economic and political factors have contributed collectively to bring about the spread of the phenomenon and have allowed it to become a means of escaping from reality.

Accordingly, treating the problem of family violence must include correcting false conceptions held by Muslims so that they may firmly believe that family violence is not a means of settling disputes, and is, rather, a means of aggravating them. Muslims are to take heed of and understand the Prophet's (PBUH) words:

> *"The strong is not he who overcomes people by force but the strong is he who controls himself while angry."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on Good Manners]

If, therefore, disciplining wives or children exceeds the limits set by the Prophet (PBUH), then this, according to Islam, is considered a weakness as it is oppression and transgression that cause complications and the severing of relations and ties.

Since Allah, Glory be to Him, permits the ruler to formulate rules (in accordance with *Sharî'ah*) for matters that are not stipulated in the Qur'an, official institutions should enact preventive laws to stop or guarantee, as much as possible, that this phenomenon will not spread. Without such laws, both the family and state will ultimately be destroyed. Also the civil society and the state must share the responsibility in setting up task forces to guide families and warn them of the dangers of family violence, so that they may contain the phenomenon.

Individual awareness of the dangers of violence, governmental awareness of the necessity of protective and remedial measures, and the civil society's awareness of the importance of making contributions to contain this problem are necessary to create a secure and prosperous society that sets a shining example of family solidarity, and societal security and safety.

Allah guides to the straight and even path.



Fiqhî Dimension of Violence
A Required Understanding



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What extremists do is actually an invaluable, "free-of-charge" gift presented to the enemies of Islam. They commit abominable acts such as damaging other people's properties, being aggressive and terrorizing safe people. In fact, they represent a very distorted image of Islam, which causes many others to shun it.

Preface

Allah has honored humankind and granted it Islam, which guarantees its followers complete success, happiness, dignity and supremacy. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"... Then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]."}* [Ṯā-Hā: 123]

Since Islam is the last of all religions, Allah, Glorious be He, has provided it with everything that makes it perfect, everlasting and suitable for all times. It is a religion that can never die. Islam is the religion of the *Fiṯrah* (pure human nature): It is in harmony, not conflict, with the human *Fiṯrah*, refines it without causing any difficulty, and conserves it without imposing any restraint. Islam has reached us being so free from any excessiveness or negligence that the Muslim nation is deemed the moderate nation among all nations. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you..."}* [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

Ibn Kathîr wrote, "The word 'median' here means 'the best'. As the saying goes, 'Quraysh is the most moderate (the best) of all Arabs in lineage and position'. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) was the most moderate man among his people, i.e. the noblest in lineage. Another example is 'the middle *Ṣalât* (i.e. *Al-'Aṣr* prayer)' which is the best prayer, as explained in the *Ṣaḥîḥ* books (i.e. Authentic collections of *Ḥadîth*) and other books."

Occasionally, some people try to attribute to Islam, whether intentionally or not, things that can distort its true, perfect image. At best, such

attempts are done with good intentions, but there is a *Fiqhî* (i.e. juristic) principle that "Good intentions do not justify bad deeds". The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"In the last days (of the world) there will appear young people with foolish thoughts and ideas."*[1]

An-Nawawî wrote, "Good judgment and discernment are gained when one gets old enough to have a lot of experience and be mentally mature." Certainly, when overenthusiasm is combined with lack of knowledge and experience and not following wise advisers, extremism is most likely to happen.

Those who kill the innocent, damage properties and terrorize people are committing heinous crimes and kill souls which Allah has forbidden to be killed except for a just cause. They kill their brothers in Islam, which is a grave sin, and kill non-Muslims who do not deserve to be killed, as in the case of those who have been granted protection or those recruited by Muslim governments to make use of their experience. Although they are non-Muslims, they should not and are not to be killed as long as they are permitted by our governments to come and live in our countries. It is the governments that secure their safety and even well-being. At most, this can encourage them to embrace Islam.

Unfortunately, what extremists do is actually an invaluable, "free-of-charge" gift presented to the enemies of Islam. They commit abominable acts such as damaging other people's properties through bombings which destroy buildings, cars and shops and kill many victims; terrorizing people who are not at war with us; and giving Islam such an untrue repulsive image that causes many to shun it.

Therefore, the phenomenon of extremism is one of the most critical issues facing the Islamic nation in the modern age. It has dangerously harmed the nation, hindered its attempts of development and negatively affected the Islamic wakefulness. In fact, it is crucial to find an effective remedy for the problem.

(1) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Zakâh* (Alms).

The current paper is an attempt to diagnose and counteract the phenomenon. It looks at the main characteristics of extremists, the most important causes of the phenomenon, as well as some attempts to solve such a problem that endangers the Muslims.

The Definition of "Excessiveness"

If concepts such as excessiveness or extremism are left to be used according to personal interests or prejudices, non-extremists may be deemed to be extremists and extremists may claim not to be so. To avoid this, the concept should be precisely and clearly defined, so that the successful solution can be easily recognized. Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "Most of the people's disputes arise due to using generalized language and analogous meanings. You may find two men quarrelling and contending about some concepts, but when they are asked to explain their point of view, they are not able to give answers or proofs. Even if they do, their proofs do not imply that the opposite view is necessarily wrong. The opposite view may be relatively right, the proof may be right in one aspect, or a third opinion may be the right one."[1] The point is that it is important to decide on the meanings of any words that are used.

What is the Determinant?

In reality, giving a definition to the word "excessiveness" requires an accurate criterion based on a moderate and reasonable approach, not missing the mark by exaggerating or underestimating any factors.

Mainstream Conventions

The mainstream notions cannot be taken as a trustworthy criterion, since people have different beliefs, environments and lifestyles. Some do wrong and are self-indulgent persons for whom the adherence to the *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions); having a beard, wearing the women's Islamic

(1) *Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ* (Collection of *Fatwâs*), 12/114.

dress and *Hijâb* (i.e. veil) or even performing congregational prayers is considered a kind of austerity and religious excessiveness. On the other hand, other people may perceive performing only the obligatory acts of worship as negligence, the trivial and grave sins as equal, and just doing what is permissible according to the *Sharî'ah* as nonobservance. In such a manner, people have different perceptions and preferences, so they cannot be taken as a valid criterion as otherwise corruption would occur. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"But if the Truth [i.e. Allah] had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined..."} [Al-Mu'minûn (The Believers): 71]

Indeed, the correct criterions here depend on linguistics and the *Sharî'ah*.

Linguistic Meaning of Excessiveness

Many lexicons and linguists have defined and explained the word "excessiveness", but here we will review just some of these definitions.

According to Ibn Durayd Al-Azdî, excessiveness means the state of exceeding the limit. This meaning is found in the Qur'anic verse:

{"...Do not commit excess in your religion..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 171]

It means: Do not exceed the limits.

In *Lisân Al-'Arab* (the Arabic Tongue), "The stem 'excess' means exceeding what is normal or sufficient." Excessiveness in religion means exceeding its limits. In the Qur'ân, a verse reads:

{"...Do not commit excess in your religion..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 171]

It is also mentioned in the following *Hadîth*:

"O people! Beware of excess in religion."[1]

(1) Related by An-Nasâ'î, the Chapter on *Manâsik Al-Hajj* (*Hajj* Rituals).

This means: Do not exceed the limits or be austere in performing it."

'Umar said:

> *"Do not exaggerate in women's dowries."*[1]

This means: Do not take too much dowries for your women.

Shar'î Meaning of Excessiveness

Allah says:

> ***{"Say, "O People of the Scripture, do not exceed limits in your religion beyond the truth..."'}*** [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 77]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"O people! Beware of excessiveness in religion."*[2]

He (PBUH) also said:

> *"Ruined are those who indulge in meticulous religiousness. (He said it thrice)"*[3]

An-Nawawî wrote, "It refers to the extremists who are excessive in word and deed."

Anas Ibn Mâlik, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Do not impose austerities on yourselves so that austerities will be imposed on you, for some people have imposed austerities on themselves and thereupon Allah imposed austerities on them. Their survivors are to be found in cells and monasteries."*[4]

From the above, excessiveness can be defined as "the state of exceeding the limits of Allah's ordinances, either in word, deed or belief".

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(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, the Chapter on *An-Nikâh* (Marriage).

(2) Related by An-Nasâ'î, the Chapter on *Manâsik Al-Hajj* (*Hajj* Rituals).

(3) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Al-'Ilm* (Knowledge).

(4) Related by Abû Dâwûd, the Chapter on *Al-Adab* (Etiquette).

The Basic Features of Extremists

Over history, extremists have typically had common features and practices. Here are the most important ones:

1- Condemnation

One of the most prominent features of extremists is that they censure the great Muslim scholars, accusing them of being deluded. This was obvious in the example of Dhul-Khuwaysirah At-Tamîmî when he said to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), "O Allah's Messenger! Be just." He considered himself more just and pious than the Prophet (PBUH) and thought that the division of shares was unfair. Actually, condemnation is a typical custom of extremists. Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "The origin of their defective ideology is that they believe the great Muslim Imâms and the majority of Muslims to be deviant and far from the right."[1]

2- Lack of Sound Reasoning

Among the most important defects of extremists is their lack of sound reasoning about the Noble Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, i.e. their wrong understanding, poor discernment and not interpreting texts on sound grounds. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) pointed out this critical point when he said:

> *"They would recite the Qur'ân, but it would not get past their throats."*[1]

The Prophet (PBUH) confirmed that they, in reality, recited the Qur'ân much, and yet they were grossly censured. Al-Hâfiz Ibn Hajar wrote, "An-Nawawî said, 'They gain no benefit from it but the mere recitation by their tongues which does not reach their throats, let alone their hearts. What actually counts is pondering on and understanding it by heart.' "

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(1) *Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ* (Collection of *Fatwâs*), 28/497.

(2) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Zakâh* (Alms).

Here is the viewpoint of the Prophet's Companions about extremists. Imâm Al-Bukhârî wrote[1], "Ibn 'Umar viewed them as the most wicked of all human beings. He said, 'They take Qur'anic verses that are revealed about the disbelievers and apply them to the believers.' "[2]

When Sa'îd Ibn Jubayr heard about the opinion of Ibn 'Umar, he liked it and said, "One of the *Mutashâbih* (i.e. verses of unspecific or ambiguous meanings) that *Al-Harûryyiah* (i.e. a sect of *Kharijites*) focus on is Allah's saying:

> ***{"...And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the disbelievers."}*** [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 44]

They pair with it the verse:

> ***{"...Yet those who disbelieve hold others as equal with their Lord."}*** [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 1]

So, if they see an Imâm judging unjustly, they say that he is a disbeliever and who disbelieves in Allah is a polytheist. Then, they go out and kill people, as you see, because they interpret this verse erroneously."

Nâfi' wrote, "When Ibn 'Umar was asked about the dissenters, he would say, 'They accuse Muslims of disbelief, deem their blood and property lawful, marry women in their *'Iddah* (period of waiting after divorce or death of the husband), and can marry who are already married. I know about nobody more deserving of being killed than them.' "[3]

So they are: shallow-minded, unjust in their judgment and behavior horribly. The noble Prophet (PBUH) rightly said about them:

> *"... They will be good in speech and bad in works... They will call to the Book of Allah (i.e., the Qur'ân) but would not (sincerely) apply it."*[4]

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(1) Al-Bukhârî, 12/282.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Istitâbat Al-Murtaddîn* (Asking Apostates to Repent).

(3) Ash-Shâṭibî, *Al-I'tiṣâm* (Seeking Protection), 2/183-184.

(4) Related by Abû Dâwûd, the Chapter on the *Sunnah*.

3- Being Young and Foolish

Extremists who do not follow the path of justice and guidance are noticeably young people with foolish thoughts and ideas, just as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

> *"In the last days (of the world) there will appear young people with foolish thoughts and ideas."*[1]

An-Nawawî wrote, "Good judgment and discernment are gained when one becomes old enough to have a lot of experience and be mentally mature."

Although Muslim youths today are very interested in studying Islam, learning its laws and sincerely sticking to them, some of them are not moderate in their perceptions and judgments. They exaggerate trivial matters, so bringing about dangerous consequences.

The Modern Features of Extremism

Recently, extremists noticeably have more excessive features than those before them.

1- Exaggeration

Extremists usually exaggerate trivialities and make them seem more important than they really are. For example, they give supererogatory matters and things that are not very serious far more importance than they deserve. By doing so, they are judging excessively even though they have good intentions and are steadfast in worship.

➢ Causes of Exaggeration

a) Extremists are unaware of the degrees of rulings, so they confuse the desirable and the obligatory acts as well as the detestable and the forbidden. The desirable and the detestable acts are given more importance than they deserve, making them equal to the obligatory and the forbidden acts. So, reference to the books on the Fundamentals of *Fiqh* is a must.

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(1) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Zakâh* (Alms).

b) Because they have so frequently read and heard about the merits of adherence to the *Sunnah* and supererogatory acts of worship, these youths mistakenly think that the nonobservance of such acts is like the nonobservance of obligatory ones. They say if one does not perform supererogatory acts, then he fails to achieve a perfect (good) level of worship.

c) Some Muslims belittle or hardly adhere to the *Sunnah* and supererogatory acts of worship. This has caused these youths to exaggerate the importance of desirable acts and the punishment for neglecting them (equaling them with the obligatory acts), and overestimating the gravity of detestable acts and the punishment for doing them (equaling them with the forbidden acts). They mistakenly think that they are protecting Islam.

➢ Examples of Exaggeration

- **In Subsidiary Matters:** Some people in a mosque disagreed and performed two *Zuhr* (noon) Prayers, each one with a different Imâm and at a different time, because they differed about the interpretation of the Messenger's *Hadîth*:

  "Delay the (Zuhr) prayer till it gets cooler, for the severity of heat is from the heat of Hellfire."[1]

  A group among them saw that the command here had to be followed, while another saw that it was not an obligatory one and that the command to delay the prayer was discretionary. As a result of this difference, they performed the prayer in two groups at the same mosque! In fact, the purpose of this *Hadîth* was to explain the possibility of praying *Zuhr* prayer later, or, at the most, the command could be interpreted as optional or supererogatory.

- **In Belief:** A controversy arose on the issue of whether or not disbelievers see Allah (on the Day of Resurrection). Disputes spread and caused such negative results that people quarreled and hostili-

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Bidâyat Al-Khalq* (the Beginning of the Creation).

ties occurred among them. They stopped going to congregational prayers, they did not even pray the *Jumu'ah* (Friday) Prayer together. Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote them a message[1] to reunite them and inform them about the truth about the dispute. Showing sorrow for what had happened, he wrote, "We never thought that disputes would come to this extent regarding such a trivial matter." He stressed, "This is not an important issue to be given so much public attention that it turns into a belief, causing quarrels and hostilities." In another section, he maintained, "This matter, as far as I know, is not one that requires enmity and separation. It was previously tackled by followers of the Prophet and the Companions, and they disagreed on it but did not quarrel or break up over it. For example, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, and their successors argued over whether or not the Prophet saw Allah in this world. They even uttered harsh words, such as 'Âishah the Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her, who said, 'Whoever claims that Muhammad (PBUH) saw his Lord would be claiming an utmost falsehood.' Nevertheless, such arguments did not lead to a quarrel or disunity. In another example, Imâm Ahmad argued with some Sunnites about the matter of the attestation of the Ten Companions' certain entry into Paradise, and there was a heated controversy. Ahmad and his advocates argued for the attestation, but they did not abandon those who refused the attestation."[2] These are just a few of many other examples.

Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "Different interpretations of rulings are too much to be standardized. If every disagreement between two Muslims caused them to quarrel, there would be no bonds of brotherhood among the Muslims."[3]

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(1) *Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ* (Collection of *Fatwâs*), 6/485.

(2) Ibid., 6/502.

(3) Ibid., 6/673.

2- Dictatorship

Among the most prominent features of modern extremism is fanatically upholding personal opinions, disrespecting other's opinions and denying the possibility of them being true if they disagree with those of one's own. Some may even go too far and declare any other opinion as foolish falsehood.

The causes of this dictatorship include:

a) **Lack of knowledge:** "Man is the first opponent of what he is unacquainted with" as the saying goes. If someone does not explore and learn about the opinions of others, he would no doubt hold obstinately onto his own.

b) **Personal desires and prejudices:** Preferences and prejudices do affect one's opinions, making one insist on his prejudgments and preventing him from responding to others' opinions and advice.

➢ Common Misunderstandings

Extremists misunderstand some of the right principles, or hold some originally wrong beliefs. Here are some Examples:

1- **There is just one undivided truth:** Surely this fact is right, but extremists do not understand or apply it rightly. The truth is intrinsically single in the abstract sense, but practically, it has two aspects:

a) There are things clarified by Allah with definite, unmistakable evidence, such as the facts that Allah is Only One and He has no partner, Ramadân is the month of fasting or *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) is invalid without standing at 'Arafât Mountain. In such matters, there is just one single truth, both intrinsically and in reality. Here, the truth is plain and unquestionable.

b) The other type of matters are vague; their evidence has different meanings for different people, and thus no certain view can be decided upon, unlike the former type. Such things are subject to *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning) and may be given more than one interpretation. Here, efforts should be made to reach the truth.

In the latter type, we should not reject or censure the opinions of others on the grounds that "the truth is only one." Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "The *Ijtihâd* of scholars on rulings is like the *Ijtihâd* on determining the direction of the *Qiblah* (Prayer Direction). If four Imâms perform the prayer in four different directions, each of them believing to be facing the *Qiblah*, then all the prayers of the four are right, even though only one of them was actually facing the true direction of the *Ka`bah*. This one would get a double reward, just as the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"If a judge gives a judgment according to the best of his knowledge and his judgment is correct (i.e., agrees with the judgment of Allah and His Messenger), he will receive a double reward, and if he gives a judgment according to the best of his knowledge and his judgment is wrong, even then he will get a reward."*[(1)]"

2- **Joining hearts by leaving desirable acts is a form of negligence:** Some people may endeavor to reconcile Muslims and bring them back to the true teachings of Islam in a wise, lenient way. For this purpose, they may leave some desirable acts. Then, extremists proceed to accuse these reconcilers of negligence and being deluded. In fact, this accusation is a result of a wrong assumption held by people who have forgotten certain facts. Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote, "It is favorable to try to join hearts by leaving some desirable acts, since the benefits of joining hearts in Islam are greater than the benefits of performing such desirable acts. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) did not change the architecture of the *Ka`bah* because he found that keeping it intact would keep the Muslims united. Also, Ibn Mas`ûd opposed `Uthmân when he did not shorten his prayers when traveling. But, he (Ibn Mas`ûd) performed the full prayers behind him and said, "To dispute is evil."

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-I`tişâm Bi Al-Kitâb Wâ As-Sunnah* (Adherence to the Book and *Sunnah*).

3- **Religious sermons are superstitious:** Some people stigmatize those who give religious advice and sermons as telling superstitions. One may wonder why this is so. It is because they found that Sufis or lay storytellers often tell superstitious stories. So they generalized this judgment, which is a form of unfavorable excessiveness. If they had deliberated on them, it would have been better for them. They forget that the books of *Sunnah* contain many Prophetic *Hadîths* related to preaching sermons and moral advice. The *Salaf* (early Muslim scholars) paid great attention to anything that made people more religious. Some of them said, "A speech that touches my heart is better for me than one hundred *Fiqhî* cases analyzed by Shurayh (a prominent Islamic scholar)."[1]

4- **Deliberation is a mere cowardice:** Accusations of cowardice and weakness are laid against those who are cautious in their endeavors to reform, patiently endure harm and refrain from rushing to confront the wrongdoers until they are completely ready and fully equipped. Indeed, such accusations reflect a cynical way of thinking and bad intentions. Extremists forget that reform requires a delicate approach and profound contemplation, and that patience and withstanding harm while moving step by step are indications of one's prudence and willpower. For example, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) assured his Companions of victory and advised them to be patient and not be hasty. He (PBUH) said:

"By Allah, this religion (i.e. Islam) will prevail so much that a traveler from Medina to Hadramaut will fear none but Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, or a wolf as for his sheep, but you (people) are hasty."[2]

Great Muslim reformers were patient and cautious, working according to a plan. The Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Azîz, may Allah be pleased with him, carried out reform gradually. He gave priority to some matters and delayed others. For this, could we describe him as being a weak man?!

(1) Ibnul-Jawzî, *Talbîs Iblîs* (Satan's Delusion), p. 119.

(2) Related by Imâm Ahmad.

5- **Leniency is no more than hypocrisy:** Some extremists do not differentiate between leniency and hypocrisy, and confuse them wrongly. If they find someone speaking gently to a wrongdoer and discussing with him leniently to avoid his evil, they attribute this to hypocrisy, especially if they are in dispute with him.

➢ **The difference between Leniency and Hypocrisy**

Leniency is an Islamic moral standard, while hypocrisy is an abominable trait that has nothing to do with Islam. Hypocrites indulge in pleasures and replace their religious commitment with worldly happiness. The glorious Messenger (PBUH) was lenient when dealing with some evildoers to avoid their evil. Al-Bukhârî related, "'Â'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated that a man asked permission to enter upon the Prophet (PBUH). When the Prophet saw him, he said:

"What an evil brother of a tribe! What an evil son of a tribe!"

When that man sat down, the Prophet (PBUH) treated him in a nice way and was completely at ease with him. When the person left, 'Â'ishah said (to the Prophet), 'O Allah's Messenger! When you saw that man, you said so and so about him, but then you treated him kindly and you were at ease with him?' Allah's Messenger said:

"O 'Â'ishah! Have you ever seen me speaking offensively? The worst people in Allah's Sight on the Day of Resurrection will be those whom the people leave (undisturbed) to avoid their evil (deeds)."[1]

➢ **The similarity between Leniency and Hypocrisy**

Al-Hâfiz Ibn Hajar wrote, "Al-Qurtubî said, 'This *Hadîth* indicates the permissibility of speaking offensively about someone in his absence if he proclaims debauchery, obscenity, injustice or advocacy of *Bid'ah* (i.e. innovation in religion). It also indicates that it is permissible to treat them leniently to avoid their evil, unless this will lead to one being hypocritical in Allah's religion.' "

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-Adab* (Etiquette).

He also wrote, "The difference between leniency and hypocrisy is that leniency implies giving up a worldly matter in favor of another worldly and/or religious one. This is permissible and may even be desirable. However, hypocrisy involves giving up a religious matter in favor of a worldly one." Ibn Baṯṯâl wrote, "Leniency is a trait of the believers, and it involves kindness towards people, gentle speech and not being harsh. It is a major cause of achieving a good rapport. The idea that leniency is the same as hypocrisy is wrong, since leniency is favorable. Hypocrisy is the practice of taking an outside appearance that differs from one's hidden core. Scholars explain it as the association with wrongdoers and completely approving of their behavior. Leniency is the use of patience and benevolence in advising the ignorant and in warning the wrongdoers against their deeds. Speaking roughly to them is undesirable as this would encourage them to persist in carrying out their disagreeable conduct. Prohibition should be carried out using gentle words and treating them kindly, especially if it is needed to make a good rapport with such people."[1]

6- **People are doomed:** Having too cynical a mentality, some individuals think that all other people are doomed, although there is a *Ḫadîth* narrated by Abû Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"If a man says 'people have been doomed,' he is the one who has suffered that fate most."[2]

Al-Khaṯṯâbî wrote, "The *Ḫadîth* indicates that if a man keeps censuring and stigmatizing other people, saying such things as: They are corrupted, doomed, etc., then he is the most doomed among them; i.e. his sins are graver than theirs, by dispraising and despising them. This may even lead him to feel proud of himself and deem himself better than others."

(1) *Fath Al-Bârî* (The Bestowal of the Creator), 10/528-529.

(2) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Al-Birr, As-Silah Wâ Al-Adab* (Benevolence, Relationship and Etiquette).

7- **If you do not deem disbelievers as being so, then you are a disbeliever yourself:** This is a belief widely used by the extremists against their opponents. In fact, this principle applies only to those who are judged to be disbelievers for a clear reason or to non-Muslims who have never embraced Islam. But for those who do believe in Islam and yet do some "polytheistic" acts, because of being ignorant or due to a misunderstanding, we need to first inform them that they are practicing a kind of disbelief.

Sheikh Muhammad Ibn `Abdul-Wahhâb argued against the claims that he judged people as disbelievers on a general basis. He wrote, "There are lies and false accusations that we judge people in general to be disbelievers, urge anyone able to announce his religiosity to desert his people and emigrate to us, accuse of disbelief anyone who does not deem wrongdoers as disbelievers or does not fight them, and many such things. All these accusations are false and fabricated, and they are intended to avert people from the religion of Allah and His Messenger."

In his message to As-Suwaydî Al-Baghdâdî, Sheikh Muhammad wrote, "I never mentioned that I judge all people other than my followers as disbelievers and that I claim their marriages to be invalid. How astonishing! How can this be accepted by any sound mind? Can such things be assumed by anyone, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, reasonable or insane?"

Then, Sheikh Muhammad pointed out, "I judge as a disbeliever anyone who learns about a Heavenly religion and then proceeds to curse it, prohibit people from believing in it and show enmity towards its followers. Those are whom I judge as disbelievers. Most of the Muslim Nation, thank Allah, are not so."

In this context, Shaykhul-Islâm Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah confer mercy upon him, wrote in a general way, "Everyone who believes in Allah has a degree of faith equal to his belief, and anyone who is proven to not have heard about the message of Islam is not to be judged as a disbeliever. This implies that all the people who perform

prayers are judged to be believers in Allah and His Messenger, except for hypocrites who show faith and hide their disbelief in the Prophet; they are not believers. Anyone who shows Islam and is not a hypocrite is judged as a believer and is included in those who will leave Hellfire even if they have only the weight of an atom (a minimum degree) of faith. This applies also to all Muslims who dispute over Allah's Attributes and Divine Decree, whatever belief they adopt. If Paradise was to be entered only by those who know as much about Allah as His Prophet (PBUH) did, then the whole Muslim Nation would never enter Paradise, since they cannot, by any means, reach such knowledge. Indeed, they will enter Paradise but they will take different rankings according to their degrees of faith and knowledge."(1)

Causes of Extremism

Many reasons lie behind the emergence of such phenomena of extremism and accusations of disbelief. These reasons include, among other things, the following:

1- Social Factors

Extremism among the young people is partly caused by their family members and relationships. Some families are affected by the schemes of Islam's enemies and have deviated from many Islamic teachings. So they disapprove of the youth's adherence to the doctrines of Islam and their refusal to follow their families' ignorant traditions. These families show disrespect to the religious youths, scorn them or accuse them of narrow-mindedness. They also treat them badly and deprive them of the privileges granted to their peers. This compels these youths to feel resentful, withdraw from social circles and to even use violence.

One factor that affects the behavior of these youths to slide into extremism is the educational institutions. The conditions of schools and universities, especially in the poor, third-world countries, are very bad.

(1) *Majmû' Al-Fatâwâ* (Collection of *Fatwâs*), 5/254-255.

Many of them teach atheistic, non-religious theories in ethics, economics, politics and sociology. They pay little or no attention to the teaching and dissemination of the true Islamic culture.

2- Psychological Factors

a) **Hastiness:** It is a human trait. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And man is ever hasty."} [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 11]

The Qur'ân includes many examples of the hastiness of Muslims. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And when those who disbelieved see you, (O Muhammad), they take you only as a mockery (saying): "Is this the one who talks (badly) about your gods?" And they are, at the mention of the Most Gracious, disbelievers. Man is created of haste (i.e. impatience). I will show you My signs (i.e. vengeance). So ask Me not to hasten (them)."} [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 36, 37]

Al-Hâfiz Ibn Kathîr wrote, "The wisdom behind mentioning human hastiness here is that when the mockers of the Prophet (PBUH) are mentioned, it makes one think that their punishment will be very imminent. So Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Man is created of haste (i.e. impatience)..."}

[Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 37]

Islam forbids hastiness and enjoins us to control it, because it may cause harm.

➢ **Causes of Hastiness**

- Hyper-enthusiasm and overwhelming passion
- Prevalence of wrong actions
- Strong desire to see the fruits of any work immediately
- Lack of endurance and experience
- Difficulties of the process of reform – causing one to give priority to unimportant issues and delay urgent ones
- Unawareness of human nature - so overburdening it with duties
- One-sided Thinking

➢ Islam Forbids Hastiness

`Â'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "The very first thing that was revealed (from the Qur'ân) was a Sura from *Al-Mufassal* (i.e., Suras No. 50 through No. 114), in which there was the mention of Paradise and Hellfire. Once people had embraced Islam, the mention of what is permissible and what is prohibited was revealed. If the first thing to be revealed was, 'Do not drink alcohol,' people would say, 'We will never give up alcohol.' If it was, 'Do not commit *Zinâ* (i.e., adultery or fornication),' they would say, 'We will never give up *Zinâ*.' "(1) It was this approach of patience and deliberation that Allah's Messenger (PBUH) adopted. He (frequently) forbade his Companions to be hasty.

Khabbâb Ibnul-Aratt, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated, "We complained to Allah's Messenger (of the persecution inflicted on us by the disbelievers) while he was sitting on a garment in the shade of the *Ka`bah*. We said to him, 'Seek help for us? Pray to Allah for us?' He said:

"Among the nations before you, a (believing) man would be put in a ditch that was dug for him, and a saw would be put over his head and he would be cut into two pieces; yet that (torture) would not make him give up his religion. His body would be combed with iron combs that would remove his flesh from the bones and nerves; yet that would not make him abandon his religion. By Allah, this religion (i.e., Islam) will prevail so much that a traveler from Sana to Hadramaut will fear none but Allah, or a wolf as for his sheep, but you (people) are hasty."(2)

The fifth Caliph, `Umar Ibn `Abdul-`Azîz, may Allah be pleased with him, explained the successful process of reform in his conversation with his young, sincere and enthusiastic son, `Abdul-Malik. The son said, "O father! What prevents you establishing justice as you like? By Allah, I do not care if you and I face all the evils in order to do this."

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Fadâ'l Al-Qur'ân* (the Merits of the Qur'ân).

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-Manâqib* (Virtues).

He replied, "O my son! I am just trying to hold people (from doing wrong) with great difficulty. When I want to revive some (religious) matter, I delay this until I give them a worldly benefit with it at the same time, so that they will accept them both together."

In another instance, `Abdul-Malik said, "O Commander of the Faithful! What are you going to say to Allah (on the Day of Resurrection) if He says to you, 'You saw a *Bid`ah* and did not eliminate it! And you saw a *Sunnah* and did not revive it!'?" He said, "O my son! Is there something that people told you to tell me about? Or is it your opinion?" `Abdul-Malik replied, "It is my own opinion and I know that you will be asked (by Allah). So what will you say?" His father said, "May Allah confer mercy upon you and reward such a son like you with goodness. By Allah, I hope that you will be one of those who assist others to do good. O my son! Your people have settled this matter (i.e. wrongdoing) firmly and utterly. Whenever I like to contend with them to seize what is at their hands (of the gains which they had by wrongdoing), I am not certain that they will not lead me to a situation in which a lot of blood will be shed. By Allah, it is better for me that the world terminates than a flask of blood is shed because of me. Do you not like that your father eliminates everyday a *Bid`ah* and revives an act of *Sunnah* until Allah judges between us and our people in truth, and He is the Best of judges?"

`Umar Ibn `Abdul-`Azîz also said, "People never obeyed me in any righteous matter that I wanted unless I gave them some worldly gratification."

b) **Boasting of good deeds:** Another psychological reason for extremism is the overwhelming feelings of pride and superiority. Extremists pay attention to performing many acts of worship superficially, but they forget to guard their hearts, so they overestimate and think too highly of themselves. They look down on other people, whether these others are obedient or not. They are unaware that one should worship Allah both physically and spiritually, not to act only to better himself outwardly. Shujâ` Ibn Shujâ` Al-Karmânî wrote, "Anyone who betters himself outwardly by adhering to the *Sunnah* and inwardly by moni-

toring (his faith) constantly, follows what is permissible according to the *Sharî`ah*, and does not look at illegal things (i.e. inappropriately dressed women), will have a faultless insight."

So, we have to improve ourselves inwardly as well as outwardly. Otherwise, there will emerge such personalities that are apparently good but in essence evil and are readily liable to kill, cause devastation, assault and carry out whatever crimes you can imagine (exactly as is happening nowadays).

How to Deal With Extremism

There are various effective tools to deal with the problem of extremism, including family, governments, the media, etc. However, we will focus here on most probably the most important tool: Dialogue. Dialogue is proven to be highly successful in overcoming the phenomenon, and examples of these are numerous.

When the *Kharijites* broke away from `Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib, the Commander of the Faithful, Ibn `Abbâs (may Allah be pleased with him) volunteered to discuss with them so that they would change their position. Here is his account of the argument:

"When *Al-Harûryyiah* were congregating to revolt against `Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib, several persons came to him and said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, (they are) revolting against you!' He always replied, 'Leave them until they (actually take up arms to) revolt.' One day, I said to him, 'O Commander of the Faithful! Delay the *(Zuhr)* prayer until it gets cooler[1] so that I will not miss it as I am going to those people (i.e. *Al-Harûryyiah*).' Then, I came to them at the time of siesta, and found their faces looking pale because they had stayed awake at night (performing night vigil prayer), their foreheads having traces of prostration, their hands being as coarse as

(1) It is religiously permissible to delay the *Zuhr* prayer for a while until it gets slightly cooler, according to the Prophetic *Hadîth*:

"Delay the (Zuhr) prayer till it gets cooler, for the severity of heat is from the heat of Hellfire."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on the Beginning of the Creation]

the knees of camels (due to performing so many prayers) and their clothes being worn-out. They said, 'What brought you here, Ibn 'Abbâs? What is this garment you are wearing?' I said, 'What do you blame me for? I saw Allah's Messenger (PBUH) wearing Yemenite (i.e. exquisite) clothes'. Then, I recited the verse:

> ***{Say (O Muhammad), "Who has forbidden the adornment of (i.e., given from) Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good (lawful) things of provision?"}***(1)
>
> [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 32]

They said, 'What brought you here?' I replied, 'I have come to you from the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) - and none of you is one of them - and the cousin of the Prophet (PBUH) (i.e. 'Alî), to whom the Qur'ân was sent down and who are the most knowledgeable about its interpretation. I have come to inform you about them and inform them about you.' Some of them said, 'Do not dispute with the Quraysh because Allah says:

> ***{"...But, (in fact,) they are a quarrelsome people.}***
>
> [Az-Zukhruf (Decoration): 58]

Others said, 'Well, let us talk to him.' Two or three of them talked to me. I said, 'What made you bear a grudge against him (i.e., 'Alî)?' They replied, 'Three things.' I asked, 'What are they?' They said, 'He allowed men to judge on a matter predetermined by Allah, while Allah says:

> ***{"...Judgment is not but for Allah..."}*** [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 57]

I said, 'This is one. What else?' They said, 'He fought and took neither captives nor spoils. If they (i.e., those he fought) were believers, it is not permissible to fight them. If they were disbelievers, then it is permissible to fight and capture them.' I asked, 'What else?' They said, 'He denied the title of the Commander of the Faithful. So, if he is not the Commander of the Faithful, then he is the Commander of the Unfaithful!' I said, 'If I bring to you from Allah's Book and His Prophet's *Sunnah* what refutes your allegations, will you give up (your revolt)?' They said, 'Why shall we not give it up (if you are right)?'

(1) Ibnul-Jawzî, *Talbîs Iblîs* (Satan's Delusion), p 139.

I said, 'Concerning the point that he allowed men to judge on a matter predetermined by Allah, Allah says in His Book:

{"O you who have believed! Kill not the game while you are in the state of Ihrâm (i.e., ritual consecration for Hajj or 'Umrah). And whosoever of you kills it intentionally, the penalty is an offering, brought to the Ka'bah, of sacrificial animals equivalent to what he killed, as judged by two just men among you..."} [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 95]

He, Exalted be He, also says about women and their husbands:

{"And if you fear a dissension between them twain (the man and his wife), send an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from her family..."} [An-Nisâ' (Women): 35]

Hereupon, Allah has referred these matters to the judgment of men. I beseech you by Allah, is it better to apply men's judgment about the blood of Muslims and reconciliation between them or on a rabbit costing a quarter of a dirham or reconciliation between spouses?' They said, 'Indeed, this (i.e. the first instance) is better.' I asked, 'Have I then got this point across?' They replied, 'Yes.' I said, 'Concerning the point that he fought and took neither captives nor spoils, would you (accept to) take your mother 'Âishah into captivity? If you agree to capture her and treat her the way you treat other captured women, then you will be disbelievers; and if you allege that she is not your mother, you will be also disbelievers. So, you are wavering between two falsehoods. Have I then got this point across?' They replied, 'Yes.'

I said, 'Concerning the point that he denied the title of the Commander of the Faithful, I will tell you about the man (whose opinion) you accept (i.e., Allah's Messenger). When Allah's Messenger (PBUH) agreed to conclude Al-Hudaybiyah peace treaty with Abû Sufyân and Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, he (PBUH) said:

"Write, O 'Alî: This is what was agreed to by Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah."

Then, Abû Sufyân and Suhayl Ibn 'Amr said, "We do not believe that you are the Messenger of Allah; if we believed that you are the Messenger of Allah, we would not fight you." Hereupon, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said:

> *"O Allah! You know that I am Your Messenger. O 'Alî, erase it and write instead: This is what was agreed to by Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah, and Abû Sufyân and Suhayl Ibn 'Amr."*

After that, two thousands of them (i.e., the rebels) gave up and the remaining were all killed."

This story emphasizes that dialogue is the most successful way to settle disputes. Therefore, everyone should adopt this approach providing that dialogue is carried out using wisdom and benevolent advice, and that it solely serves the purpose of reconciliation.



The Cultural and Fiqhî Causes of the Phenomenon of Extremism



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Drying the sources of violence and extremism is attainable by commitment to observe the etiquettes of controversy, such as sincerity, exercise neutrality; respect the opponent's opinion, hope for knowing the truth even if it is declared by the opponent and avoid scorning the other's opinion, falling into self-conceit and engaging in that which one has no knowledge about.

I have combined these two reasons – cultural and *Fiqhî* – due to the fact that they are closely related and to be able to show the features of immoderation and extremism. Here, I shall speak in short about the following reasons:

- Being fanatic about a certain *Fiqhî* school, party, sect or sheikh.
- Misunderstanding the texts of *Sharî'ah*.
- Innovation in religion and accusing people of disbelief.
- Misapplying terms.
- Confusing the permissible and impermissible controversy.
- Indulging in excessiveness or negligence concerning the Divine Names and Attributes of Allah.

First Cause: Being Fanatic about a Certain *Fiqhî* School, Party, Sect or Sheikh

Indeed, Allah, Exalted be He, has protected His True Religion by righteous Imâms and great scholars. They defend the religion of Allah against the misinterpretation of falsifiers and the distortion of extremists. They have a precedence of honor and truthfulness in the Muslim nation. Accordingly, scholars of the nation have unanimously agreed to adhere to their *Fiqhî* schools, demanded the nation to consider their efforts at studying the basic proofs of *Sharî'ah*, ambiguous problems and its goals, and required them to look into their proofs without being fanatic; a trait which is not accepted by the noble Imâms. Our scholars confirm that following the footsteps of a certain Imâm is acceptable for those who cannot study proofs and do not know how to make use of them, provided that this is done without being immoderate or fanatic.

Unfortunately, the Muslim nation has been afflicted with this kind of fanaticism towards *Fiqhî* schools because of ignorance and narrow-mindedness regarding the Islamic texts, without knowing their wisdom and original or relative meanings. An example of fanaticism was mentioned by Ad-Dahlawî (may Allah have mercy on him) when he said that some fanatics broke a man's finger because he pointed with it during the *Tashahhud*[1], as a punishment for not adhering to the *Fiqhî* School of Abû Hanîfah.

In the past, this kind of fanaticism was found among the scholars of *Hadîth* and jurisprudence, and it can also be seen in the present. For example, a group of those claiming adherence to the science of *Hadîth* were severely fanatic against the most authentic book (of *Hadîths*), ranking second after Allah's Book (the Qur'ân). They tore the book of "*Fath Al-Bârî Fî Sharh Sahîh Al-Bukhârî*" (The Bestowal of the Creator in Explaining the Authentic *Hadîths* of Al-Bukhârî's Compilation) which was complied by the Commander of the Believers in the science of *Hadîth*, Imâm Ahmad Ibn Hajar Al-`Asqalânî (may Allah have mercy of him). Moreover, some fanatics claimed that this compilation distorted the Muslim Creed, while some others said that it involved major errors in monotheism concerning "Deity" and "Lordship". Because of accusing this great book of distorting the Creed and having misunderstandings of monotheism, these people underestimated it to the degree that they set fire to it.

Actually, we witnessed such examples when we were studying, so we know that they are not mere tales. Such forms of fanaticism and immoderation played a significant role in driving some of the Islamic "wakefulness" members to extremism.

When looking into the history of Islamic thought, it appears that there was a commendable Islamic revival in the nation after the humiliation and inferiority that came as a result of the Mongolian invasion in the 8th century A.H. which tore its entity. However, the reality of this wakefulness changed into an atmosphere full of intellectual terrorism due to the prevalence of sectarianism which is represented in the dispute among the followers of Schools of *Fiqh*, as

(1) A special supplication recited at the middle and end of the prayer.

well as the dispute of *Al-Matrîdiyyah*[1] and *Al-Ash'ariyyah*[2] between themselves and their dispute with *Al-Hashwiyyah*[3].

The 7th and 8th A.H. centuries witnessed a great Islamic wakefulness at the hands of some Imâms who firmly established the Creed of the *Salaf*[4], refuted the opinions of athiests and fought against whims and innovated matters in religion. Yet, the voice of the immoderate view was dominant, so it stopped this wakefulness in its early stages and turned it into terrorism and conflicting fundamentalism.

Imâm Al-Qâsimî (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Contemplate closely on *Al-Qadarîyah*[5]. How they punished those who refused to adhere to their opinions or respond to their call when they had the upper hand during the Caliphate of Al-Ma'mûn?! History recorded that some Imâms were beaten, humiliated and imprisoned for many years by these fanatics. This was a blot in their history, despite what they claimed of resisting redundancy and narrow-mindedness as well as enlightening minds with the religious knowledge of the ancestors. In fact, immoderation and violence were both adopted by them. A great dissension occurred, so Al-Juwaynî, the Imâm of the Two Sacred Mosques, fled from Iraq to Al-Hijâz when *Al-Matrîdiyyah* had the upper hand and became fanatic against Al-*Ash'ariyyah.*[6]"

(1) This group believes that the mind is the source of knowledge and that legal texts come after it. They shared the *Salaf's* (early Muslim scholars) view of not deeming as a disbeliever the one who commits a major sin. They also agree with the *Salaf* regarding issues such as Divine predestination, the Companions and Imamate (caliphate). However, they run counter to them regarding the doctrine of prophethood, for they maintain that it is not decided by the Pure Divine Will.

(2) An Islamic sect characterized by departing from the direct meaning of the Qur'anic verses that tackle Allah's Attributes. They give them figurative interpretations in order to avoid any similarity between Allah and humans.

(3) A title referring to the Sunnites (scholars of *Hadith*) who confirm Allah's attributes.

(4) The term refers mainly to the early Muslims; namely, the Prophet's Companions and their successors. It also includes everyone that follows their footsteps until the Day of Judgment.

(5) Anti-Fatalism: Those who believe in the doctrine that every individual creates and controls his own actions. They do not believe that disbelief and sins are matters predestined by Allah.

(6) *Risâlat Al-Jarh Wa At-Ta'dîl* (Treatise of Invalidating and Validating Narrators), p. 33.

Depicting the condition of that wakefulness, Imâm Al-Qâsimî also said, "Whoever studies the history book about Al-Hâfiz Ibn Hajar entitled 'Ad-Durar Al-Kâminah' (the Invisible Pearls), will be astonished. One will observe that any great and well-known scholar for whom there was a possibility of being belied against and accused of disbelief was at risk of his blood being violable. As mentioned in the biography of 'Alâ' Ad-Dîn Al-'Attâr, the student of Imâm An-Nawawî, any prominent Imâm became helpless because of his old age and weakness; yet, no one felt pity for him. In spite of his helplessness and disability, he would always carry a document from a judge as a proof of his innocence of all accusations of disbelief. Unfortunately, in the name of religion, inviolable bloods were shed, innocent people were tormented in prisons and exiled, and senile as well as young people were terrorized for many years.[1]"

We quoted all these texts because they show the causes that drove people to immoderation and consequently stopped the Islamic wakefulness in that important era of history.

Second Cause: Misunderstanding the Texts of *Sharî'ah*

It is well-known for researchers, scholars and students that the language of the *Sharî'ah* texts is Arabic, which may have many differences regarding its significances as well as expressed, implied, inferred, apparent, explicit and interpretative meanings. Moreover, Arabic may involve brevity, rhetoric, ellipses, omissions, generalizations and specifications that may cause misunderstandings.

Studying *Sharî'ah* texts requires a superior proficiency and sound view regarding the multiple factors that may be found in them. In this respect, priority should be given to the most appropriate meaning in case there is a contradiction. Further, *Sharî'ah* texts may involve signs and situations which increase ambiguity and misconceptions.

(1) *Risâlat Al-Jarh Wa At-Ta'dîl* (Treatise of Invalidating and Validating Narrators), pp.40-41.

Avoiding such problems may be through:

(A) Accurately comprehending the interpretation of texts, and knowing their indications and the contradictions of such indications. This depends on the knowledge of language and its meanings.

(B) Comparing Qur'anic texts to what the Prophet (PBUH) said concerning them, as he explained what he received from Allah.

(C) Comparing texts to *Ijmâ'* (consensus of Muslim scholars) reached by the scholars of the nation concerning the issues whose pertaining rulings are reached through *Ijmâ'*.

(D) Comparing texts to the prevalent conventions during the age of Revelation and the following ages, unless such conventions have changed.

One of the examples of misunderstanding texts can be witnessed as being due to narrow-mindedness and not considering the aims and wisdom behind the texts.

Imâm Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah said: "Narrow-mindedness in understanding texts is misguidance in religion and ignorance of the goals of previous scholars and ancestors."[1]

This approach of narrow-mindedness in interpreting the texts of Qur'ân and *Hadîth* emerged during the era of *Kharijites*. They rebelled against Imâm 'Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) because of the issue of "Arbitration". They accused him of disbelief as they adopted the superficial meaning of Allah's Words:

{"...The decision is only for Allah..."} [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 57]

The *Kharijites* said, "'Alî has allowed men to decide on matters of religion, thus he is a disbeliever." This same severe approach was followed by accusing the disobedient believers of disbelief based on the superficial meaning of some texts in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, such as Allah's Words:

{"They only invent falsehood, who do not believe in the verses of Allah..."} [An-Nahl (The Bee): 105]

(1) *I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în* (Informing Muftis), 3/89.

Likewise, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"When an adulterer commits illegal sexual intercourse, then he is not a believer at the time (he does so)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

Also, he (PBUH) said:

"Abusing a Muslim is Fusûq (evil) and fighting him is Kufr (disbelief)."

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

No doubt that these superficial meanings are flimsy proofs because the general rule about unbelief is specified in other positions in the Qur'ân. One of these general proofs is Allah's Words in which He says:

{"Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 48]

In addition, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Allah will order those who have had faith equal to the weight of a grain of mustard to be taken out from Hell."

[Related by Al- Bukhârî][1]

Further, Abû Dharr narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"No servant says, 'There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah,' then dies on that belief, but will enter Paradise." I said, "Even if he committed adultery or theft?" He (PBUH) said, "Even if he committed adultery or theft." I asked again, "Even if he committed adultery or theft?" He (PBUH) said, "Even if he committed adultery or theft." He (PBUH) said it thrice, and in the fourth time, he said, "Even if Abû Dharr's nose was put in the dust."

[Related by Muslim]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî – Chapter of *Al-Îmân* (Faith). Abû Sa'îd Al-Khudrî narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, *"When the people of Paradise will enter Paradise and the people of Hell will go to Hell, Allah will order those who have had faith equal to the weight of a grain of mustard..."*

Commenting on this, the texts (of Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) on which these people have based their views actually relate to the one who deems any of the major sins and immoralities as lawful. As for the falsehood that causes one to get out of the fold of faith, it is related to lying about Allah's *Sharî'ah*. As for the Prophet's saying, *"When an adulterer commits illegal sexual intercourse... at the time (he does so)"*, it means disbelief of (Allah's) favors not disbelief of the religion. According to the *Salaf*, this disbelief is in a lower rank because it does not make a person leave the religion. This misunderstanding simply resulted from not comparing proofs, specifying general rulings, generalizing specific rulings and explaining brief rulings.

The *Kharijites* accused 'Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) of disbelief out of their ignorance of this principle; that is, they did not study texts and compare them to each other. They adopted nothing but the superficial meaning of Allah's Words ***{"...The decision is only for Allah..."}***. Moreover, they disregarded the other proofs stating that 'Alî was one of the ten Companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) given the glad-tidings of entering Paradise, and he was one of the first forerunners in faith. 'Alî was also the son-in-law of the Prophet (PBUH) and one of his purified household concerning whom Allah said:

> ***{"...Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification."}***
>
> [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 33]

Hence, the narrow-mindedness in interpreting *Shar'î* texts was the prominent characteristic of *Kharijites*. Imâm Muhammad Abû Zahrah said: "They (i.e., *Kharijites*) adopt the superficial meanings of texts without looking into their aims. They do not go beyond the meaning they first understand and they strictly believe it."[1]

This approach disappeared when Imâm 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib fought its adherents and defeated them in Harûrâ' and An-Nahrawân[2]. Then, it

(1) *Târîkh Al-Madhâhib* (The History of Doctrines) by Imâm Muhammad Abû Zahrah.

(2) Two places in Iraq.

appeared again in the Islamic thought arena with its fundamentals and bases. It was strongly solidified by Imâm Dâwûd Ibn 'Alî Az-Zâhirî and Imâm Ibn Hazm Az-Zâhirî (may Allah have mercy on them both); their principles were to adhere to the surface meaning without studying the core of the texts. They would also leave analogical deduction and explanation. The scholars of other *Fiqhî* schools refuted this approach, revealed its defects and introduced undeniable arguments against its adherents due to their exclusion of analogical deduction and explanation. Ibn Hazm was very sharp-tongued in his arguments with other scholars.

Once again, the adherents of this approach have appeared in Islamic thought, and its consequences have begun to emerge from some people who adopt the same line of reasoning of Ibn Hazm, but they do not have his knowledge.

We have begun to hear that there are some people who stick to the surface meaning of texts and reject any interpretation, justification, analogical deduction or approval. They interpret texts away from their situations and inferences, and issue *Fatwâs* (legal opinions) and religious judgments contradicting acceptable and reasonable matters.

An example of such *Fatwâs* was the one related to someone who was asked about paying *Zakâh*[1] for fruit. He replied that there was no *Zakâh* for them. Actually, his answer was based on his narrow-mindedness in understanding the superficial meaning of Allah's Verse:

{"...And give its due [Zakâh] on the day of its harvest..."}

[Al-An'âm (Cattle):141]

According to the superficial meaning of the verse, that *Fatwâ*-issuer claims that fruit is picked, but not harvested, so there is no *Zakâh* due on fruit. This is despite the fact that the term "harvest" refers metaphorically to both the tangible and intangible deeds that man harvests. In support of this, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

(1) *Zakâh* is an annual expenditure for the benefit of the Muslim community, primarily to help the poor.

"Does anything cause people to be cast in the Hellfire on their faces (or '...on their noses...,' according to another narration) other than what their tongues harvest (utter)?"[1]

There are many similar *Fatwâs* that cannot all be stated here.

Another example: Someone lost a sum of money, then a *Mufti*[2] said to him, "Ask forgiveness from Allah because you wasted your money while the Prophet (PBUH) prohibited us to waste money." Actually, the Prophet (PBUH) intended "wasting money recklessly or in a spendthrift manner."

This approach led its adherents to inappropriately apply texts to situations which are different to those for which the text was revealed, the same as was done by *Kharijites*. When Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked about the *Kharijites*, he said, "Those are the most evil people; they misinterpreted verses concerning disbelievers and related them to the believers."

If this approach is propagated, it will bring about various patterns of immoderation and extremism that will drive the Islamic wakefulness to be involved in heated doctrinal and intellectual conflicts. Accordingly, the nation will be exhausted by conflicts, particularly when such conflicts are supported by ignorant Imâms who are sharp-tongued, like Ibn Hazm, but do not have his knowledge. If this is the case, then the situation will turn into a catastrophe.

Third Cause: Introducing *Bid'ahs* (Innovations in Religion) and *Takfir* (i.e., Accusing People of Disbelief)

A. Introducing *Bid'ahs*

Initially, a question should be raised in this respect: What is the relationship between *Bid'ah* (a matter innovated in religion) and the phenomenon of extremism? Before we answer this question, an introduction should be

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî who deemed it *Hasan* (Approved) *Sahîh* (Authentic) *Hadîth*.

(2) A scholar who issues *Fatwâs*.

made to explain important matters that help reveal the truth. To illustrate more, scholars discussed this issue in the past, and their approaches and orientations varied as regards determining the definition of *Bid'ah*. They also differed in classifying the kinds of *Bid'ah*, and the results of their research were based on two principles:

The First Principle: *Bid'ah* is an innovated matter in religion that emulates *Sharî'ah*, with the aim of exaggerating in worshipping Allah. In this sense, *Bid'ah* is related to only religious matters and it is characterized by having no true *Shar'î* base. In order for an innovated matter to be regarded as *Bid'ah*, it should be associated with the intention of exaggerating when worshipping. Thus, if this condition is absent, the behavior will not be a *Bid'ah*. In brief, this kind of *Bid'ah* is always blameworthy.

This view is adopted by Imâm Mâlik and those who follow his school, such as Ash-Shâṯibî (may Allah have mercy on them all).

The Second Principle: *Bid'ah* is any innovated matter contradicting the *Sunnah*; that is, the matter that contradicts the *Sunnah* is blameworthy while the one going in line with it is praiseworthy. Accordingly, *Bid'ah* is either disapproved or approved. This approach has been adopted by Imâm Ash-Shâfi'î and some of his followers, such as Al-'Izz Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm, as well as some later scholars such as Imâm An-Nawawî and Ibn H̱ajar, in addition to some noble scholars such as Ibnul-Athîr, Ibnul-'Arabî Al-Mâlikî, Ibn Rajab Al-H̱anbalî and many others.

Eventually, such scholars and Imâms concluded that *Bid'ah* is of four types:

- Approved as far as the linguistic meaning is concerned.
- Disapproved as far as *Sharî'ah* is concerned.
- A non-creed-related *Bid'ah* that does not make a Muslim leave the religion.
- A creed-related *Bid'ah* which drives its holder into falsehood.

To conclude, the issue of *Bid'ah* has been established on the above-mentioned classification.

However, this topic has been aroused again in the field of scientific research. Every party has begun to refute other parties' schools or approaches in favor of its own school or approach. This is in contradiction with the tradition of the honorable scholars of the past as regards the mutual dialogue between them. Every party has started to refute the other's *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) by practicing its own *Ijtihâd* that actually contradicts the stated scientific rules. Moreover, they have disregarded many of the conditions of *Bid'ah*. In other words, the labeling of acts as innovations has not been limited to matters of worship only, but has been extended to include normal aspects of life. Neither the intention of the innovator nor the cause of *Bid'ah*, be it for the sake of worship or habit, have been taken into consideration. Furthermore, *Bid'ah* has never been regarded as an innovation if there is any hypothetical or decisive *Shar'î* evidence. Yet, the process of introducing *Bid'ah* has been generalized to include controversial scientific *Fiqhî* issues such as reciting *Basmalah*[1] aloud while performing the prayer and invoking Allah publicly in the *Fajr* (Dawn) Prayer, in spite of proofs and *Hadîths* concerning such issues.

The process of labeling acts as *Bid'ahs* has contributed to the emergence of extremism. This has been the case because of the unusual confusion in differentiating between "non-creed-related *Bid'ah*" and "creed-related *Bid'ah*". The immoderate parties have begun to apply the qualities of creed-related *Bid'ahs* introduced by deviated sects to those who recite *Basmalah* aloud in the prayer, publicly invoke Allah in the *Fajr* (Dawn) Prayer or supplicate Him through the mediation of the Prophet (PBUH). This results in accusations of apostasy, exclusion from standing at *Al-Hawd*[2], deprivation of the Prophet's Intercession[3] and blackness of faces

(1) The saying of "*Bism Allah Ar-Rahmân Ar-Rahîm*" (In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful) before reciting *Al-Fâtihah* (the Opening Sura of the Qur'ân).

(2) A fountain, on the Day of Judgment, granted by Allah to the Prophet (PBUH). "Its water," says the Prophet (PBUH), "is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, and its drinking cups are like stars in the sky." The Prophet (PBUH) also says that whoever drinks out of it from among his followers will never feel thirsty.

(3) The intercession of the Prophet (PBUH) for the people before Allah on the Day of Judgment.

on the Day of Judgment. These qualities are in fact related to the people innovating creed-related matters which send people astray. Hereupon, there is a confusion in differentiating between the two kinds of *Bid'ahs*. This is despite the fact that the non-creed-related *Bid'ahs* have no relation to actual *Bid'ahs*, except for the name. This is exactly like a person who steals a grain; this does not necessitate applying the penalty of theft, though this act is actually theft. This was mentioned by Ash-Shâṯibî, who adhered to the first principle.

The Base of Controversy in This Issue

The basic cause of controversy concerning categorizing *Bid'ah* is the *Hadîth* stating:

"... Every Bid'ah (innovated act in religion) is an aberration."[1]

Thus, the immoderate people adhere to the general meaning of this *Hadîth*, deeming *Bid'ah* as a clear aberration, while those who have categorized it consider two principles:

The First Principle: There are some *Hadîths* that have limited the generality of the *Hadîth* stating: *"Every Bid'ah is an aberration."* Among these *Hadîths* is the comment of 'Umar concerning *Tarâwîh* Prayer[2]:

"What a good innovation!"[3]

Also, Mujâhid narrated:

"'Urwah Ibnuz-Zubayr and I entered the Mosque (of the Prophet) and saw 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar sitting near the dwelling place of 'Â'ishah and some people were offering the Duhâ (Forenoon) Prayer. So we asked him about their prayer and he replied that it was a Bid'ah."[4]

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(1) See Ash-Shâṯibî in his book *"Al-I'tisâm"*. The *hadith* is related by Muslim, Chapter on *"Jumu'ah (Friday) Prayer"*.

(2) Supererogatory prayer performed after the *'Ishâ'* (Night) Prayer during the month of Ramadân.

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *"Salât At-Trâwîh"* (Praying at Night in Ramadan).

(4) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *"Hajj"* (Pilgrimage).

In this *Hadîth*, *Bid'ah* was not a dispraised matter. If it was otherwise, the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) would not perform it congregationally in the mosque. This is affirmed through other narrations. For instance, Al-Hakam Ibnul-A'raj authentically narrated:

> *"I asked Ibn 'Umar about the Duhâ (Forenoon) Prayer and he replied, 'It is Bid'ah (an innovation in religion), but what a good Bid'ah!'"*[1]

In this *Hadîth*, he meant performing the *Duhâ* Prayer congregationally or in the mosque.

Also, Sa'îd Ibn 'Umar Al-Qurashî authentically narrated:

> *"I followed Abû 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar to learn As-Sabhah – Duhâ (Forenoon) Prayer – and when he (Abû 'Abdullah) would see them perform it (i.e., as a congregational prayer), he said, 'What a good innovated matter is their Sabhah' "*
>
> [Related by Ibn Abû Shaybah]

There is a group of *Sahîh* (Authentic) *Hadîths* that may be regarded as a means of specifying the generality of the *Hadîth* stating,

> *"Every Bid'ah (innovated act in religion) is an aberration."*

In his explanation of *Sahîh* Muslim, Imâm An-Nawawî is one of those who did not view the generality of the above *Hadîth*. In this regard, he said:

"The *Hadîth 'Every Bid'ah is an aberration'* is not general for it refers to the innovated matters that do not have any roots in the *Sharî'ah*.[2]

In his explanation of *Sunan At-Tirmidhî*, Al-Hâfiz Abû Bakr Ibnul-'Arabî commented on the Prophet's *Hadîth "Be on your guard against acts of innovation (in religion)"*[3] saying:

"Be mindful, may Allah give you useful knowledge, that *Bid'ah* is of two categories. The first is the one that has no origin but whim and personal

(1) Ibn Abû Shaybah, 2/408, Ad-Dâr As-Salafiyyah.

(2) 6/153.

(3) Related by At-Tirmidhî, who deemed it *Hasan* (Approved) *Sahîh* (Authentic) *Hadîth*.

inclination. This is a complete aberration; namely, the misguiding *Bid'ah*. The other category involves those matters subjected to legal *Qiyâs* (i.e., analogical deduction). This is the tradition of the honorable Caliphs and noble Imâms."[1]

These words indicate that the generalization of the words "acts of innovation" mentioned above is not a common case.

The Second Principle: The scholars who categorized *Bid'ahs* commented on the context of the *Hadîth* *"Every Bid'ah is an aberration"* saying that it should not be applied to all innovated matters in general. They introduced some proofs and arguments, including the command of the Prophet (PBUH) to his Companions to adhere to his *Sunnah*, whereas he (PBUH) said:

> *"Adhere to my Sunnah (tradition)..." till his words "Be on your guard against acts of innovation (in religion), for every innovation (in religion) is Bid'ah..."*

When the Messenger of Allah commanded his Companions to adhere to his *Sunnah* as well as the tradition of the Rightly-guided Caliphs[2], this matter required him to warn them against *Bid'ah* that would contradict the *Sunnah* and tradition of the Caliphs, but not against the absolutely innovated matters; otherwise, the first generation in Islam would be, God forbidding, the first to innovate in religion. This is a strong proof of the non-generality of the *Hadîth*. This issue is clearly understood by the Muslim scholars, not the laymen or Westernized people. Accordingly, whoever denies this is thus accusing the Prophet's Companions of innovating or adding to Allah's religion. It is not logical or religious to adhere to a proof of generality which is hypothetical, according to most scholars, and reject a proof of non-generality which is decisive. It goes without saying that decisive proofs take priority over hypothetical ones.

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(1) See "*'Âridat Al-Ahwadhî*" (Wit of the Witty) with regard to the interpretation of this *hadîth*.

(2) The four Companions who were the first caliphs after the Prophet's death, namely Abû Bakr As-Siddîq, 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattâb, 'Uthmân Ibn 'Affân and 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib.

Eventually, we affirm that the difference in scholars' views concerning *Bid'ah* is a cause of immoderation, especially when labeling controversial issues that are subjected to the consideration of *Mujtâhids*[1] as *Bid' ahs*, as well as issues included in the meanings of proofs with regards to any specification, generalization, absoluteness and limitation. Additionally, many disputes related to controversial issues have occurred because of such differences among approaches when talking about *Bid'ah*.

B. *Takfîr* (Accusing People of Disbelief)

Accusing people of disbelief is when someone says to another, "You are a disbeliever!" or "O disbeliever!" *Takfîr* is one of the most serious accusations one may ever face. That is because one's blood, property and honor will be deemed as lawful as a result of such an accusation. This approach first appeared during the age of the *Kharijites*, who accused Imâm 'Alî and the Muslim Community of disbelief. Moreover, they detached themselves from the Muslim Community and fought against them at An-Nahrawân and other places. Imâm 'Alî uprooted them all and restored the truth.

Also, *Takfîr* appeared in the age of *Ar-Râfidah*[2], who judged the Companions of the Prophet as disbelievers, cursed the first generation of Muslims, insulted the predecessors and disassociated with them. Such a sect was followed by some people who became an opposing party that accused the other party of disbelief. Consequently, both parties deemed the blood of the other party as lawful (i.e., lawful to be killed). All these acts are vain and groundless. This is nothing but a form of immoderation, ignorance, fanaticism and dissension practiced against each other. Allah, Exalted be He, is the Only One able to guard us from falling into such afflictions.

(1) Jurists qualified to attempt a reasoned or deduced solution for unprecedented legal problems.

(2) Also *Ar-Rawâfid*; sing. *Râfidî*: The term literally means "the Objectors"; some Shiite group who were called so because they kept away from Zayd Ibn 'Alî. They refused the caliphates of Abû Bakr As-Siddîq and 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, as they would believe that the Prophet (PBUH) had appointed 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib as his successor.

The Legal Ruling on Accusing a Muslim of Disbelief

There is a consensus among the adherents of the *Sunnah* and Muslim Community that it is impermissible to accuse a Muslim, who utters the Two Testifications of Faith[1], of disbelief because of a sin s/he commits. It is, also, impermissible to accuse other sects of Muslims of disbelief. Moreover, it is forbidden to accuse anyone of disbelief except when s/he denies a religiously taken for granted matter, an explicit text of the Qur'ân or performs an act that has no other interpretation but disbelief.

Since *Takfîr* is a serious matter, the *Hanafî*[2] jurists maintained that if a person says something that may be interpreted as 99% disbelief and as only 1% non-disbelief, this person should not be deemed as a disbeliever.

When looking into the history of the Muslim Nation and the negative effect of *Takfîr* on it, one will be astonished to see the disgraces and tragedies the Muslim Nation has suffered as a result of *Takfîr*. All that has come as consequences of insolence in dealing with the religion, lack of piety and devotion, and prevalence of ignorance which those practicing *Takfîr* consider as a means of disassociating themselves from the disbelievers.

In his valuable message entitled *"Al-Jarh wa At-Ta'dîl"* (invalidating and validating narrators of *Hadîth*), Imâm Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Qâsimî mentioned the title "The campaign of prominent verifiers against those claiming knowledge of *Fiqh* and accusing people of disbelief" where he said:

"When the approach of *Takfîr* and accusing virtuous scholars of misguidance intensified during the middle centuries of the first millennium after *Hijrah*[3], the sound-minded jurists rejected such an approach and began to answer such accusations. As a result, *Hanafî* jurists said, 'If a per-

(1) The Two Testifications are the Muslim's declaration of faith. They are: "There is no deity but Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger".

(2) The followers of the *Fiqhî* School of Imâm Abû Hanîfah.

(3) The beginning of the Islamic calendar, which started with the immigration of the Prophet to Medina.

son says something that may be interpreted as 99% disbelief and as only 1% non-disbelief, this person should not be deemed as a disbeliever due to the serious effects of *Takfir* on the religion."(1)

Imâm Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Qâsimî went on to say, "The 8th century A.H. was a period in which *Takfir* as well as its accompanying practices of oppression and intimidation reached its peak."

It was common for some judges to hasten to judge persons as disbelievers and, consequently, shed their blood. These judges based their decisions on an innovated ruling stating: The repentance of an infidel is unacceptable. Accordingly, whoever would utter words implying disbelief, then his blood would be lawful (i.e., it was lawful to kill him) even if he had repented and become one of those with understanding. This is because they maintained that the infidel's repentance is not acceptable.

The contemporary Islamic arena is afflicted with this incurable disease since a group of immoderate Islamic callers have turned into judges and started to judge people as disbelievers and deem their blood as lawful.

Fourth Cause: Misapplying Terms

In order to understand this issue, we have to make an explanatory introduction. Whoever explores the method of designating or terming facts or names according to the meaning of the names they generated from will find that such a process, including dialoguing, does not go beyond the following three factors:

Linguistic Significance

It is set by undefined linguists. It is the absolute, original meaning, for example "creature" is linguistically used to refer to every creature on earth.

Conventional Significance

It is used by some people with a limited meaning, such as using the word "creature" to specifically refer to animals and human beings.

(1) *"Risalat Al-Jarh wa At-Ta'dîl"* (Message of Invalidating and Validating Narrators of *Hadîth*) by Al-Qâsimî.

***Shar'î* Significance**

It is the one conveyed and used by the Islamic *Sharî'ah* with a specific meaning such as *"Salâh"* to refer to prayer, *"Zakâh"* to refer to giving charity, and *"Hajj"* to refer to pilgrimage. Thus, these terms have *Shar'î* meanings other than their linguistic meaning.

Shar'î discourse may include the three significances. If this is the case, the appropriate meaning is that which is indicated by the context of the text. However, if no particular meaning is clear from the context, controversy may occur. In this case, the first priority is given to the *Shar'î* significance, then the conventional significance if the first one is not appropriate. If this is difficult, priority will then be given to the linguistic significance.

Accordingly, the scholars attributed the saying of the Prophet (PBUH) *"The congregation (i.e. congregational prayer) is to be performed by two persons or what is more than that (number)"*[1] to the *Shar'î* significance of the validity of congregational prayer and appointment of a leader when traveling. That is, the Prophet's saying should not be attributed, in this case, to the linguistic significance (in Arabic) of considering the number two as any congregation, in general. Moreover, scholars attributed the Prophet's saying: *"Circumambulating the House (the Ka'bah) is (like) prayer."* to the *Shar'î* prayer that stipulates ablution since the Prophet had been sent to illustrate the matters of *Sharî'ah.*

Knowing that a discourse is attributed to the tradition of its founders, we have to know that one of the most important causes of immoderation is to misapply terms and significance.

Here is an example to illustrate more:

The word "Kharijites" has two indications.

A. A linguistic indication, which means the absolute revolt against the ruler or the ruling system.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî; The Book of *Adhân* (Call to Prayers).

B. A conventional indication or *Shar'î* indication, which refers to the group that have detached themselves from the Muslim community and have their own thoughts and beliefs, such as rejecting the idea of arbitration, accusing those who do major sins of disbelief and deeming their blood as lawful.

Unfortunately, there is a big confusion in differentiating between these two terms, which has resulted in the emergence of immoderation and extremism in the arena of Islamic thought in old and recent times.

Fifth Cause: Confusing between Permissible and Impermissible Controversy

Linguistically, controversy is the opposite of accord. Jurisprudentially, it is a science through which truth is established and falsehood is abolished.

Controversy has different kinds: Commendable, dispraised and a third one which is both commendable and dispraised.

Commendable Controversy: It refers to the one supported by truth and derived from knowledge. It is the controversy between a Muslim and the people of whims and inclinations, since it is obligatory to have contrasting ways to them because Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Then We put you, [O Muhammad], on an ordained way concerning the matter [of religion]; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know."}***
>
> [Al-Jâthiyah (The Kneeling): 18]

Dispraised Controversy: It has three forms:

a. The one based on whims and inclination to personal desires away from the truth. Actually, desires deviate people away from the truth and misguide them from the Right Path, as Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 87]

b. The controversy based on ignorance which is attributed to the people of disbelief and aberration. The Qur'anic texts mentioned that Allah's messengers would censure their people for their ignorance. Allah, Exalted be He, tells us about the people of Prophet Moses (PBUH), saying:

{They [the Children of Israel] said, "O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods." He said, "Indeed, you are a people (who) are ignorant."} [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 138]

Conveying the dialogue of Prophet Noah (PBUH) with his people, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And O my people, I ask not of you for it any wealth. My reward is not but from Allah. And I am not one to drive away those who have believed. Indeed, they will meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people (who) are ignorant."}

[Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 29]

Allah, the Almighty, also says about the people of Prophet Sâlih (PBUH):

{"And I convey to you that with which I was sent; but I see you [to be] a people (who) are ignorant."}

[Al-Ahqâf (The Sand-Dunes): 23]

Ignorance comes in the forefront of matters and leads to immoderation and extremism. The ignorant may rush to severely deny the argument of his opponent without relying on any sound proof except for his ignorance and foolishness. In his book *"Al-I'tisâm"* (Seeking Protection), Ash-Shâtibî confirms this view stating that being ignorant of the goals of the *Sharî'ah* as well as deducing its meanings from the first sight (the outward meaning) without verifying it by inspecting it closely are among the causes of disunity. Such ignorance cannot be attributed to those who are firm in knowledge. The case of the Kharijites is a relevant example since they completely detached themselves from religion. The Prophet (PBUH) described them as reading the Qur'ân but it would not go beyond their tongues. The Prophet (PBUH) meant – Allah knows best – that what they read of the Qur'ân will not reach their hearts; i.e., they will not understand it, since the heart is the place of understanding.

c. The type of controversy based on fanaticism, which is represented by adhering to other people's sayings without relying on any proof. This type, which we have explained earlier, is one of the most important causes of immoderation and extremism.

Controversy Mixed between Commendable and Dispraised Controversies:

It is the one found in practical, subsidiary matters that are considered in the light of opposing proofs. Some of these proofs may be given priority over others. Among the examples of this type are the *Fiqhî* controversial matters, such as controversies relating to the loud recitation of *Basmalah* during the prayer and the *Qunût* (i.e., invoking Allah) in the *Fajr* (Dawn) Prayer.

Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim said about the *Qunût* in the *Fajr* Prayer:

> "The scholars of *Hadîth* are in the middle between those who deem it detestable and those who deem it commendable at times of distress. They are more understandable to *Hadîths* than both parties. That is, they invoke Allah in the same situations the Prophet (PBUH) used to invoke Him, and abandon this invocation in the situations the Prophet (PBUH) abandoned it. These scholars consider uttering the *Qunût* or abandoning it as adherence to the *Sunnah*. However, they neither disapprove of those who say it constantly, deem it as a *Bid'ah* nor judge it as a violation of the *Sunnah*. Moreover, they neither disapprove of those who deny it at times of distress, judge abandoning it as a *Bid'ah*, nor judge those who abandon it as violating the *Sunnah*. They maintain that whosoever says the *Qunût* is acting well and whosoever does not say the *Qunût* is also acting well."

Ibnul-Qayyim went on to say:

> "This is a permitted controversy that does not censure the one who performs it or the one who leaves it. The case of the *Qunût* is similar to that of the controversy relating to raising one's hands during the prayer, the exact wording of *Tashahhud*, the *Adhân* (call to prayer) and *Iqâmah* (immediate call to prayer)."

According to Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim, controversy in practical subsidiary matters which have the ruling of being preferable or less preferable – not the ruling of being clearly right or wrong, nor of being a *Sunnah* act or *Bid'ah* – is permitted and no blame can be directed to anybody because of such a controversy. Rather, everyone will be rewarded. If one gives a judgment based on *Ijtihâd* and one's judgment is correct, one will be rewarded doubly, and if one gives a judgment based on *Ijtihâd* and one's judgment is incorrect, one will get a reward as long as one sought the truth, one's intention is sincere and desires and fanaticism are put aside.

Regulations and Rules

It is important to shed light on some very significant regulations, the ignorance of which has caused confusion in how to differentiate between permissible and impermissible controversies or between commendable and dispraised ones.

There are some scientific rules that must be taken into consideration when dealing with a controversial case. Ignoring such rules has resulted in the arousal of conflicts and emergence of immoderate people everywhere.

Among these important rules are:

1. Fully knowing the causes of the *Fiqhî* controversy, such as the controversies related to the different meanings that arose due to the differences in the ways of recitation (of the Qur'ân), the opponent's ignorance of a certain *Hadîth* (as a proof), and the existence of terms having multiple meanings, as well as the controversies related to some *Fiqhî* rules and bases of deduction.
2. Realizing that a *Mujtahid*[1] practicing *Ijtihâd* on issues not stated clearly in the texts (Qur'ân or *Sunnah*) will be rewarded and there will be no sin on him. If his judgment is correct, he will be rewarded doubly, and if his judgment is incorrect, he will receive one reward.

(1) A Muslim scholar who is well-versed in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and practices *Ijtihâd* (individual reasoning and discretion for an atypical, legal question).

3. Understanding that no judgment reached through *Ijtihâd* is invalidated by another judgment based on *Ijtihâd*, because there is no preponderance of one over the other; otherwise, there will never be an *Ijtihâd* on which a *Shar'î* ruling is based.
4. Adhering to the etiquettes of debates such as being sincere, observing objectivity, respecting the opponent's opinions, seeking the truth even if it is said by an opponent, and respecting the people of knowledge. This is in addition to lowering one's voice during the conversation, keeping quiet except when there is a necessity to talk, avoiding scorning opponents, keeping away from self-admiration, and staying away from intervening in issues about which one has no knowledge. There are numerous etiquettes of debates. Al-Khaṯîb Al-Baghdâdî mentioned them in his book entitled *"Al-Faqîh wa Al-Mutafaqqih"* *(Faqîhs and so-called Faqîhs).*
5. Avoiding censuring a person who adheres to a controversial matter. Instead, one should condemn a person who rejects a matter which is agreed upon. That is because there is no disapproval regarding controversial issues.
6. Avoiding controversial matters is desirable since it represents cautiousness, fear of falling into sin and avoidance of doubtful matters.
7. Believing that whoever adopts an opinion (based on *Ijtihâd*) is not to be judged as introducing a *Bid'ah* by his opponent who adopts a different opinion. Otherwise, everyone who adopts a certain opinion will be judged as introducing a *Bid'ah.*
8. Knowing that any discussion on a certain proof does not make it unreliable, especially if this discussion is not based on a well-established rule. Therefore, a proof remains sound unless it is abrogated, qualified for particular circumstances by another sound proof or deprived of its argument by means of a well-established element.

The ignorance of these important rules has been the cause of the intellectual conflicts, immoderation and extremism which have been witnessed on the arena of the blessed Islamic wakefulness in most Islamic countries. There have appeared some people who deny issues, but these

issues were based on *Ijtihâd*, in which controversy is permissible, such as reciting *Basmalah* loudly during the prayer, saying the *Qunût* in the *Fajr* (Dawn) Prayer and using the *Sibhah* (Rosary)[1] to count *Tasbîh*.[2] Also, some people began to abrogate an *Ijtihâd*-based ruling with another *Ijtihâd*-based ruling without relying on any established proof, though the *Fiqhî* rule states: An *Ijtihâd*-based ruling is not to be abrogated by another *Ijtihâd*-based ruling. We have seen some people who do not cease contradicting Imâms in their judgments and *Fatwâs* (legal opinions) or even refrain from contradicting them, although leaving controversy is recommended. All this is due to their ignorance of the etiquettes and rules of controversy and debates.

Sixth Cause: Exaggerating and Showing Remissness When Tackling Allah's Divine Names and Attributes

When studying the history of Islamic thought, it will be found that the controversy related to the issue of Divine Names and Attributes of Allah, Exalted be He, has been a basic element in the appearance of immoderation and disunity. It has also been an important cause of impeding the Islamic wakefulness witnessed after the Tartars invasion of the Muslim countries and achieved by religious reformers throughout the 7th and 8th centuries A.H. Two opposite trends have appeared concerning this issue:

1. Exaggeration in interpreting the Divine Attributes as well as describing Allah with attributes but claiming these attributes have no meaning. This trend was adopted by *Jahmiyyah*[3] and *Mutazilites*.[4]

(1) A string consisting of 33 or 99 beads used by Muslims to count the number of times they praise or glorify Allah.

(2) Glorifying Allah by saying "*Subhân Allah* (Glory be to Allah)" and suchlike expressions.

(3) A sect who followed Jahm Ibn Safwân As-Samarqandî. Among their heresies is the denial of Allah's Attributes, claiming that these attributes describe people and so cannot be ascribed to Allah.

(4) A Muslim sect founded by Wâsil Ibn 'Atâ'. Its followers claim that those who commit cardinal sins are in a state between faith and disbelief.

2. Exaggeration of establishing the Divine Attributes in a way that leads to Anthropomorphism and embodiment; namely, to give Allah the attributes of humans. This trend was adopted by *Mujassimah*.(1)

These two trends have become wide-spread on the arena of the Islamic wakefulness, which has led to disuniting the nation into two fighting and extremist doctrines. This has had bad effects on the contemporary Islamic wakefulness.

Imâm Adh-Dhahabî tackled those two trends as well as the middle course, which is the acceptable view. He said:

> "No doubt that some scholars exaggerated in negating, refuting, interpreting, distorting and exalting Allah till they fell into committing a *Bid'ah* or describing the Creator with attributes that have no meaning. Moreover, some scholars of *Hadîth* exaggerated the authenticity and acceptance of weak *Hadîths* pertaining to the issue of Divine Attributes, so claiming they adhere to the principles of the *Sunnah*. As a result, conflicts and hatred broke out, and everyone (both these extreme views) accused the other of disbelief and introducing *Bid'ahs*. We seek refuge with Allah from hypocrisy in religion, or accusing a Muslim of disbelief by interpreting his words in a way which he himself avoids, as long as he is a sincere monotheist who glorifies Allah, Exalted be He."(2)

Adh-Dhahabî also said:

> "The scholars of the *Salaf* (Muslim Predecessors) have interpreted all crucial and insignificant matters, but they have not interpreted Qur'anic verses and *Hadîths* which relate Divine Attributes, despite being the core of the religion. Actually, if the interpretation of these Divine Attributes was possible or inevitable, they would take the initiative to interpret them. Ac-

(1) A deviated sect claiming that Allah, Exalted be He, is like His creatures as regards having a real human body. To prove their opinion, they refer to some Qur'anic verses in which the face and hand of Allah have been mentioned.

(2) "*Siyar A'lâm An-Nubalâ'*" (The Biographies of the Most Prominent Scholars) 10/506.

cordingly, it is unanimously accepted that reading and leaving them as they are (without any interpretation or change) is the right stance. Thus, we have to believe in them without any interpretation, so as to follow the *Salaf* and believe that these Attributes belong to Allah Alone, and that none knows their interpretation but Him."[1]

Moreover, Adh-Dhahabî said:

"We seek refuge with Allah from giving Him the attributes of humans or denying the *Hadîths* of Divine Attributes since whoever understands them, according to the religious view, will never deny them. However, there are two dispraised trends that are present among those who believe in them. The first trend is represented in interpreting Allah's Attributes away from their contexts. The *Salaf* did not interpret them or place them out of their contexts. Rather, they believed in them and left them as they were revealed. The second trend relates to exaggeration in proving them and imagining them according to the limited human frame of thinking. This is a clear ignorance and misguidance..."

Actually, these two trends have been in existence since the appearance of *Jahmiyyah* and *Muqâtiliyyah*[2] in the second century A.H., but this phenomenon became prominent through the 7th and 8th centuries A.H. Al-Qâdî Abû Yûsuf (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

"There is nothing on earth worse than two types of people: *Jahmiyyah* and *Muqâtiliyyah*. *Muqâtiliyyah* refers to the followers of Muqâtil Ibn Sulaymân Al-Balkhî who died in 150 A.H. and who was accused by Imâm Abû Hanîfah of Anthropomorphism (giving Allah the attributes of His creatures). Abû Hanîfah said that Jahm (the leader of *Jahmiyyah*) exaggerated in negating

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(1) Ibid.

(2) The followers of Muqâtil Ibn Sulaymân Al-Balkhî who would establish the Divine Attributes of Allah to a degree of likening Him to His creatures.

anthropomorphism till he (Jahm) claimed that Allah, Exalted be He, could not have any real attributes, while Muqâtil exaggerated in proving the Attributes of Allah till he claimed that Allah was like His creatures."[1]

Influence of These Two Trends on Contemporary Islamic Wakefulness

These two opposing trends have begun to reappear on the arena of the contemporary Islamic thought. In other words, the beliefs of *Jahmiyyah* have reappeared again. There are now some scholars who deny the Attributes of Allah, the Almighty, by exaggerating in distorting and interpreting them. This group drew themselves close to the ruling regimes and judged Muslims as disbelievers, exactly like the *Mutazilites* during the reign of Al-Ma'mûn. This misguided group deemed Muslims' property, blood and honor as lawful. Moreover, they accused their opponents of Anthropomorphism and Embodiment.

Likewise, the opposite party, which exaggerates in proving the Attributes of Allah, has reappeared. These scholars represent a minority in the Muslim countries today. I have heard one of them interpreting the issue of Allah's establishment upon the Throne as meaning He literally sits on the Throne like a man does. Another one interpreted it as literally descending and moving, then he said, "As befits His Glory" in order to satisfy his and his counterparts' logic. Rather, he should have said, "It is an establishment that befits His Glory" without any interpretation. Furthermore, some of this group once said that Allah would let His Prophet (PBUH) sit with Him on the Throne on the Day of Resurrection. This belief is wrong according to two aspects:

First: Some scholars, such as Ibn Hajar, narrated the relevant *Hadîth* without the word "with."

Second: It is the most important one. This *Hadîth* is *Da'îf* (weak) because it was narrated by 'Abbâd Ibn Ya'qûb and Muhammad Ibn Fudayl. Ibn Ya'qûb is known to confuse *Hadîths* and he has been judged by Adh-Dhahabî as unreliable.[2]

(1) See: *Ma'ârij Al-Qabûl* (Degrees of Approval), 1/123.

(2) *Siyar A'lâm An-Nubalâ'* (The Biographies of the Most Prominent Scholars), 11/536.

The Muslim scholars disapproved of what Mujâhid (one of the scholars who claim that the Prophet (PBUH) will sit with Allah on the Throne) said. As mentioned in the book *"Al-Mîzân"* (The Balance), Adh-Dhahabî (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

> "Mujâhid's opinion was disapproved as regards the interpretation of the Qur'anic text: ***{"...It is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station."}*** [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 79] This is because he said that Allah would let His Prophet (PBUH) sit with Him on the Throne on the Day of Judgment."[1]

These two opposing trends have driven many of the youth of the wakefulness towards delinquency, immoderation and extremism. Each of these two trends has begun to accuse other parties of disbelief and introducing *Bid'ahs* and deem their inviolable matters as lawful, exactly as happened from the 4th century up to the 8th century A.H.

What Is the Median Trend?

The median trend is to follow the footsteps of the Prophet's Companions, their successors and the sincere scholars. The Companions have not dealt with this issue except with submission and belief, leaving their real interpretation to Allah, Exalted be He, as He knows them best. We should believe in Allah's Names and attributes without anthropomorphism, embodiment or interpretation. This approach is the same one adopted by the followers of the Companions as well as the firm scholars such as Mâlik, Al-Awzâ'î, Az-Zuhrî, Makhûl, Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd, Abû Hanîfah, Ash-Shâfi'î and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (may Allah have mercy on them all).

In the book *"Sharh I'tiqâd Ahl As-Sunnah"* (Explaining the Creed of the Adherents of the *Sunnah*), Al-Lâlikâ'î said:

"Az-Zuhrî and Makhûl would say, 'Pass by those *Hadîths*' i.e., leave the *Hadîths* involving Allah's Divine Names and Attributes as they are without interpretation."

(1) See: *"Mîzân Al-I'tidâl"* (Balance of Moderation), 4/309.

Supporting the same opinion, Ibn 'Uyaynah said:

"Every Attribute which Allah, Exalted be He, has given to Himself in the Qur'ân must be read without any interpretation or anthropomorphism."

Moreover, Al-Walîd Ibn Muslim said:

"I asked Mâlik, Al-Awzâ'î, Ath-Thawrî and Al-Layth Ibn Sa'd about the *Hadîths* involving the Attributes of Allah and they said, 'Pass by them as they should not be interpreted.' "

However, if someone interprets some of the Divine Attributes and his interpretation is correct and close to what is truly intended, it will be accepted. Yet, if his interpretation is far from the truth, it will be denounced. In the same vein, Ibn Daqîq Al-'Îd said:

"We view that the challenging and mystifying indications of Allah's Attributes are true according to what Allah has intended them to be. However, if anyone interprets any of these Divine Attributes and his interpretation is close to the intended meaning and corresponds with the meaning according to the Arabic tongue, it will neither be denied nor deemed as a *Bid'ah*. Yet, if his interpretation is far from the intended meaning and does not correspond with the meaning according to the Arabic tongue, such an interpretation will be excluded, and then we refer to the rule of belief in the Divine Attributes along with exalting Allah above any anthropomorphism."(1)

When Adh-Dhahabî wrote Ibn Khuzaymah's biography in the book "*Siyar A'lâm An-Nubalâ'*" (The Biographies of the Most Prominent Scholars), he mentioned that whoever refuses to acknowledge that Allah, Exalted be He, established Himself upon the Throne and above the Seven Heavens should be judged as a disbeliever, his blood is lawful (i.e., to be killed) and his wealth should be taken as booty. Adh-Dhahabî commented:

(1) Ash-Shawkânî, "*Irshâd Al-Fuhûl*" (Guidance of the Great Scholars), P. 77.

"His book (i.e. the book of Ibn Khuzaymah) on Monotheism is a large volume. He tackled one of the Prophetic *Hadîths*, involving the Divine Attributes, by interpreting it. Therefore, the one who interprets some of these Divine Attributes is not blameworthy, even though the *Salaf* (Muslim predecessors) did not interpret the Divine Attributes, but they believed in them and authorized the knowledge of their true meanings to Allah and His Prophet (PBUH). Furthermore, if any scholar errs, despite his *Ijtihâd*, belief and care to follow the truth, and then we accuse him of misguidance and *Bid'ah*, there will be only a few Muslim Imâms (may Allah have mercy on us all)."(1)

What good and fair words they are! They are full of piety and devoutness.

This is the median trend related to the issue of Qur'anic Verses and *Hadîths* about the Divine Attributes. We should believe in all of them according to what Allah intends them to be (without interpretation). It would be sufficient for us to follow the footsteps of the nobles and the rightly-guided Muslims of this nation who adhered to Allah's Words:

{"O our Lord! We have believed in what You revealed and have followed the messenger [i.e. Jesus], so register us among the witnesses [to truth]."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 53]

Nevertheless, we should not have radical opinions against those who interpret some of the Divine Attributes. This is based on the fact that some great Imâms, such as Imâm Mujâhid did provide an interpretation to Allah's Verse:

{Lest a soul should say, "Oh [how great is] my regret over what I neglected in regard to Allah..."} [Az-Zumar (The Hordes): 56]

It was interpreted as referring to the deeds one would neglect (in this life).

(1) *"Siyar A'lâm An-Nubalâ"* (The Biographies of the Most Prominent Scholars) 14/373 and 14/374.

Likewise, Imâm Ash-Shâfi`î did the same concerning Allah's Verse:

{"...So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 115]

It was interpreted as referring to the *Qiblah* (facing the *Ka`bah* in prayer) of Allah; i.e., wherever one is, do not face any place but it.

Moreover, Imâm Ibn Taymiyyah interpreted Allah's Words:

{"...And He is with you wherever you are..."}

[Al-Hadîd (Iron): 4]

The phrase ***"with you"*** indicates that Allah knows everything about us, but He is not literally with us Himself.

To conclude, I have written this paper in a hurry, and I ask Allah for forgiveness, good health and to die in a good state. I ask Allah to dedicate this work solely for His sake.



Extremism and the Crisis of the Muslim Intellect



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The youth's avoidance of the educational aspects which make their hearts tender and gentle in dealing with others is probably the greatest challenge faced by contemporary Islamic movements. This requires activist organizations to make education based on the Prophet's guide-lines a first priority in their programs.

Preface

Any close observation of the conditions of Muslims today will create a strong feeling of astonishment. There are a lot of contradictions, but they can be summarized into two major aspects. At one extreme, Allah's religion (i.e. Islam) is not given due attention and is not abided by enough. At the other, the Islamic teachings are taken very stringently, to the extent of overstepping their true nature and purposes.

These are two negative aspects rejected by Islam, both in its clear texts or in its inferred implications. Perhaps the second aspect poses the greatest danger to Islam. It attaches to Islam things with which it has nothing to do, and causes people to dislike it as well as showing them a very deformed image of Islam. It brings forth a lot of distress for Muslims and increases their problems, while Islam needs their true support to stretch its wings of mercy all over the world.

Being actually innocent of such a phenomenon, it would be unfair to associate Islam with it. Also, it would be a big mistake to justify this association with claims that it is necessary due to the requirements of the age or pressures of the current circumstances. Any scrutiny of the phenomenon of violence should examine its roots and identify the weaknesses that contributed to its aggravation. In fact, it is fair to say that the problem of violence is originally related to a misunderstanding of, and wrong perceptions about, Islam. Political factors play an undeniable role in this. In a word, the phenomenon constitutes the most important aspect of the crisis of the Muslim intellect.

Lack of sound understanding of Islam causes people to be unaware of its true nature and objectives. The Islamic *Sharî'ah* has become mere ordinances; worship is taken as just physical activities and movements; and faith and piety have ended up being no more than mental concepts isolated from practical behavior. This way, mercy has disappeared from Muslims' dealings with each other, let alone with non-Muslims. This is in contradiction with all the teachings of our religion. In addition, there is an inadequate understanding of the current conditions in which Muslims live.

Thus, it is necessary to examine this topic considering the following points:

- Primary roots of extremism
- The crisis of the Muslim intellect
- The concept of *Jâhiliyyah*.. A wrong perception
- Our need for a *Fiqhî* system based on the lenient manners of the Prophet (PBUH)
- Violence and retribution in the Hereafter

Primary Roots of Extremism

It is probably correct to maintain that extremism, from which Muslim societies suffer severely, is not something new. It has its origins deeply rooted in the far past. Perhaps its first heralds date back to the Prophetic era. There is a *Hadîth* reported by 'Abdur-Rahmân Ibn Abû Nu'm, that Abû Sa'îd Al-Khudrî said:

> "'*Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib, may Allah be pleased with him, sent Allah's Messenger (PBUH) a piece of gold from Yemen. It was still mixed with the earth and carried in tanned leather (a bag). Allah's Messenger (PBUH) distributed it amongst four persons: 'Uyaynah Ibn Badr, Aqra' Ibn Hâbis, Zaydul-Khayl and either 'Alqamah or 'Âmir Ibn At-Tufayl. One of his Companions said, 'We are more deserving of this (piece of gold) than these (people)'. When the Prophet (PBUH) knew about this, he said, 'Do you not trust me though I am entrusted by the One in the Heavens, and I receive the news of Heaven (i.e. Divine Revelation) both in the morning and the evening?' A man*

with sunken eyes, raised cheek bones, a prominent forehead, thick beard, shaven head and tacked up waist sheet stood up and said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Fear Allah!' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Woe to you! Am I not, of all the people of the earth, the most entitled to fear Allah?' Then that man went away. Khâlid Ibnul-Walîd said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Shall I chop his neck off?' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'No! He seems to be one who performs prayers.' Khâlid said, 'Many are those who offer prayers and say with their tongues (i.e. mouths) what is not in their hearts.' Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'I have not been ordered (by Allah) to search the hearts of the people or cut open their bellies.' Then the Prophet looked at him (i.e. the man) while the latter was walking away and said, 'From the offspring of this (man) there will come out (people) who will recite the Book of Allah (i.e. the Qur'ân) continuously and elegantly, but it will not pass their throats (i.e. they will neither understand it not act upon it). They will go out of the religion (i.e. Islam) as an arrow goes through the body of a game.'"

[Related by Al-Bukhârî]

Here, that man talked roughly and coarsely with Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and showed dissatisfaction with the shares which were distributed by the Prophet. Our beloved Prophet (PBUH) foretold that the seeds of rebellion and extremism were not going to be confined to this limit, but would be followed by other actions from people who would keep reciting the Qur'ân and yet lack a reasonable understanding of Islam and its objectives.

However, the Prophet (PBUH) reacted to the dissatisfaction of that man with leniency and patience, on the basis that he performed prayers and that the Prophet (PBUH) could not look at his heart or fathom his inner intentions. He (PBUH) always handled matters discreetly, so that Muslims would not be infected by extremism which could bring them doom in the Hereafter.

It may be claimed that extremism is something found in any society and not limited to a particular society or religion. This is actually true, since the Islamic religion has been sent as a mercy for the whole world. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a mercy for all the worlds."} [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

Besides, it is a religion of moderation whose true followers are moderate. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community..."}
[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

Whatever comes in conflict with these two principles should be avoided.

However, when Imâm 'Uthmân Ibn 'Affân, may Allah be pleased with him, was killed, the Muslim society experienced dramatic changes that caused the Muslim thought to suffer from increasingly aggravating defects:

1. Violence of the State

After the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, Mu'âwiyah, may Allah be pleased with him, came to power as the first monarch. The Prophet (PBUH) had mentioned this in several *Hadîths*. For example, Safînah, the bondsman of Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

"The Prophet (PBUH) used to go to his Companions after performing the Subh (i.e. Morning) Prayer and ask them about the dreams they had during the night. One day, he asked them, 'Which of you had a dream?' A man said, 'O Allah's Messenger! I had a dream, in which I saw as though there were scales descending from the sky. You were put in one pan of the scales and Abû Bakr was put in the other, and you were heavier. Then you were taken up and Abû Bakr was left in his place. Then 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb was brought and put in the other pan, and Abû Bakr was heavier. Abû Bakr was then taken up and 'Uthmân was brought and put in the other pan. 'Umar was heavier. Then both 'Umar and 'Uthmân were taken up, and also the scales were taken up'. Upon hearing this, signs of displeasure appeared on the face of the Messenger (PBUH) and he said, 'The Caliphate of the Prophethood will last for thirty

years; then there will be a kingdom (i.e. the ruling system will be a monarchy)'."[1]

In Al-Musnad of Abû Ya`lâ, Abû Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said,

"The first to alter my Sunnah is a man from Banû Umaiyyah."[2]

Al-Albânî commented on this *Hadîth*, "Perhaps the *Hadîth* refers to the change of the election policy of the Caliph to the hereditary system."[3]

Thus, consultation and free election were no longer applied in choosing the rulers, although the pledge of allegiance should be given willingly, with free choice. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"... He who swears allegiance to a Caliph and gives him the pledge of his hand and the sincerity of his heart (i.e. submits to him both outwardly and inwardly) should obey him to the best of his capacity..."[4]

The pledge of allegiance is a social contract between a ruler and the people. It involves two commitments:

- **Commitment of Faith:** Both rulers and the public are all committed to comply with Allah's *Sharî`ah.*
- **Commitment of Action:** Both rulers and the public are committed to seek the nation's best interests in accordance with Allah's *Sharî`ah.*

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(1) Related by Al-Hâkim in *Al-Mustadrak* (Revised Collection of *Hadîth*), 3/75 No. 4438; See also Al-Albânî, *Sahîh Abû Dâwûd*, 3875; *Mishkât Al-Masâbîh* (the Niche of the Lamps), 6011; *Kitâb As-Sunnah* (the Book of *Sunnah*), 1135. He claimed it to be a *Sahîh* (i.e. authentic) *Hadîth*.

(2) Al-Albânî, *Sahîh Al-Jâmi` As-Saghîr* (the Small Comprehensive Book on Authentic *Hadîths*), 1/504 No. 2582.

(3) Al-Albânî, *Silsilat Al-Ahâdîth As-Sahîhah* (The Series of Authentic *Hadîths*), 1/330 No. 1749.

(4) *Sahîh Muslim*, the Chapter on *Al-Imârah* (Government), the Section of "Fulfillment of the covenant made with the caliphs is imperative. The Caliph to whom allegiance is sworn in the first instance has an established supremacy over those who assume power later", 3/1472.

2. Violence Exercised Against the Four Great Imâms

▫ Imâm Abû Hanîfah An-Nu'mân

His full name is An-Nu'mân Ibn Thâbit Ibn Zûtâ. He was born in Kufah in 80 A.H and died in 150 A.H. He lived for a long time during both the Umayyad and the Abbasid eras.

Abû Hanîfah was repeatedly invited to take over judiciary tasks, but he always refused. For this reason, he was tortured by the governor of Iraq, Yazîd Ibn Hubayrah, during the regime of Marwân. His refusal was not the only reason for his torture, but he was also tried by offering him the post to find out how loyal he was to the state. It seemed that scholars often refused to collaborate with a regime of which they did not approve, so that this collaboration would not be perceived as a support to the regime."[1] This is demonstrated by the description given by Abû Hanîfah to the revolt of Zayd Ibn 'Alî Ibnul-Husayn against Hishâm Ibn 'Abdul-Malik: "His revolt resembled the military strategy of the Prophet (PBUH) and his army on the day of the Battle of Badr."[2]

Similarly, in the time of the Abbasid Caliphate, Abû Ja'far Al-Mansûr assigned Abû Hanîfah as the chief judge of the state, but he also refused to take over the position and, again, he was tortured. These were just early attempts to subjugate scholars. In a book titled *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab* (Fragments of Gold), there is a documentation of the account in which Ar-Rabî' Ibn Yûnus, the chamberlain of Al-Mansûr, narrated, "I saw the Commander of the Faithful arguing with Abû Hanîfah about the offer of taking over the position of chief judge. Abû Hanîfah said, 'Fear Allah! Share your responsibility only with someone who fears Allah. By Allah, I am not reliable when I am at ease, so how can I be reliable when I am angry? If a judgment was passed against you and you threatened to drown me in the Euphrates or that I change the judgment, I would choose to be drowned. You have a retinue who can be swayed in your favor, and I am not

(1) Muhammad Al-Khudarî, *Târîkh At-Tashrî' Al-Islâmî* (History of Islamic Legislation), p. 230.

(2) Ibn Abû Al-Wafâ', *Tabaqât Al-Hanafiyyah* (Rankings of the Hanifite), p. 496.

suitable for this'. He (i.e. the King) said, 'You are a liar! You are suitable'. He said, 'You have just judged in agreement to my wishes, against your request. How can you appoint and trust a judge while he is a liar?'[1]" Thereupon, Abû Hanîfah was beaten, tortured and later poisoned.

❑ Imâm Mâlik Ibn Anas

His full name is Mâlik Ibn Anas Ibn Abû 'Âmir Al-Asbahî. He was born in Medina in 93 A.H. and died in 179 A.H.

Imâm Mâlik, may Allah confer mercy upon him, supported Muhammad An-Nafs Az-Zakiyyah in his revolt against Abû Ja'far Al-Mansûr, since the people's pledge of allegiance was given to him under coercion, and there is a principle that any pledge given under coercion is null and void. Imâm Mâlik frequently mentioned the following *Hadîth* of the Prophet (PBUH):

"There is no divorce or emancipation in case of duress."[2]

People were compelled to swear that they would divorce their wives if they broke their pledge of allegiance. Because of his position, Imâm Mâlik was afflicted with such severe torture that his shoulder was broken.[3]

In *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab*, it is reported that Imâm Mâlik was taken to Baghdad and its governor said to him: "What do you think of temporary marriage?" He said: "It is impermissible in Islam." Then he was asked: "What do you think of the judgment of Ibn 'Abbâs regarding it?" He replied: "The judgments of others about it are more compatible with the Book of Allah (i.e. the Qur'ân)." Insisting on his opinion that it is impermissible, he was put over a bull and taken around the city with his face stained. He removed the filth from his face and said, "O people of Baghdad! Whoever does not

(1) Ibnul-'Imâd, *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab* (Fragments of Gold), 1/228

(2) *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, the Chapter on *At-Talâq* (Divorce), the Section of "The Divorce of the Coerced and the Forgetful", 1/659.

(3) See Adh-Dhahabî, *Syar A'lâm An-Nubalâ'* (Biographies of the Distinguished Nobles), 8/80; *At-Tabarî, At-Târîkh* (The History), 4/427; *Ibnul-Athîr, Al-Kâmil Fî Târîkh* (The complete stories in History), 5/532; *As-Syûtî*, Târîkh Al-Khulafâ' (The History of the Caliphs), p 250.

know me let him know me. I am Mâlik Ibn Anas. It is done to me what you see in order to admit that temporary marriage is permissible, but I will not admit this."[1]

◘ Imâm Muhammad Ibn Idrîs Ash-Shâfi`î

His full name is Abû `Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Idrîs Ibn Al-`Abbâs Ibn `Uthmân Ibn Shâfi` Al-Matlabî. He was born in 150 A.H. and died in 204 A.H. In the time of Hârûn Ar-Rashîd, Ash-Shâfi`î, may Allah confer mercy upon him, was accused of adopting the Shiite doctrine in Yemen, the center of the Shiites at that time, because he used to talk about Imâm `Alî, may Allah honor his face, and his virtues. When accusations of being a Shiite and a *Râfidî* (i.e. a subgroup of the Shiites) increased against him, he said:

If it is an act of a Râfidî to love the Household of Prophet Muhammad,

Let humankind and the Jinn testify that I am a Râfidî[2]

In 189 A.H., the Imâm and 9 members of *Al-`Alawyyiûn* (those attributed to Imâm `Alî) were taken to Ar-Rashîd after the governor wrote him a letter concerning them saying "Nine persons of *Al-`Alawyyiûn* took action, and I am afraid they are going to break away from you. There is a man with them called Muhammad Ibn Idrîs, with whom I have nothing to do. He does with his tongue (i.e. speech) what a knight cannot do with his sword. So, if you want to keep Hejaz under your control, you should detain them."[3] The nine persons were killed, while Imâm Ash-Shâfi`î saved himself from being killed by his diplomatic speech and the advocacy of his friend, the Judge of the Palace.

In his comment on this story, Mr. `Abdus-Salâm Fîghû wrote, "Ash-Shâfi`î escaped the charge and saved his head. He learned a lesson that he should never engage in a political conflict."[4]

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(1) *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab* (Fragments of Gold), 1/290.

(2) Abû Na`îm, *Hilyat Al-Awlyâ'* (Decoration of the Pious), 9/153; Abû Nasr As-Subkî, *Tabaqât Ash-Shâfi`yyiah Al-Kubrâ* (the Greatest Rankings of the Shafiite), 1/299; Siar A`lâm An-Nubalâ' (Biographies of the Distinguished Nobles), 10/58.

(3) Shadharât Adh-Dhahab (Fragments of Gold), 1/323.

(4) 'Abdus-Salâm Fîghû, *Al-Mihnah Fî Hayât Al-Fuqahâ'* (Distress in the Lives of the *Fiqh* Scholars), p 21.

But how can we account for Ash-Shâfi`î showing of his support, and even his pledge of allegiance, for the secession of Yahyâ Ibn `Abdullah Ibn Al-Hasan Al-Mathnî in 193 A.H.? This is documented in *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab*: "Yahyâ Ibn `Abdullah Ibn Al-Hasan Al-Muthana proceeded to send his advocates everywhere. He was given the pledge of allegiance by many of the people of the Two Sacred towns (i.e. Mecca and Medina), Yemen, Egypt, Iraq and Persia. As for scholars, he was given the pledge of allegiance by Muhammad Ibn Idrîs Ash-Shâfi`î..."[1]

Such instances suggest that the conditions of the ruling systems at that time did not please the scholars of the nation, the heirs of the Prophets, because of the ruler's despotism and use of coercion to take the pledge of allegiance.

▫ Imâm Ahmad Ibn Hanbal

His full name is Ahmad Ibn Hanbal Ibn Hilâl Adh-Dhuhalî Ash-Shaybânî Al-Marwazî. He was born in Baghdad in 164 A.H. and died in 241 A.H.

History cannot ignore the torture inflicted on Imâm Ahmad upon the issue of the creation of the Qur'ân, a dissension that was only created because the Mutazilite ideology reigned the Palace. Being a mere controversy, it was politically exploited against the scholars and Sheikhs of the Adherents of the *Sunnah* and the Muslim Community[2]. This would not have happened if the rulers were levelheaded. They could have kept the scholars and the whole nation away from such dissentions that disunited the nation and wasted its powers. This drives us to reemphasize the importance of reviewing the so-called "Islamic theology" and reconsidering the ideologies of the theological philosophical sects who were a byproduct of the change from the Caliphate system to monarchy.

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(1) Ibnul-`Imâd, *Shadharât Adh-Dhahab* (Fragments of Gold), 1/338.

(2) See Qutb Mustafâ Sânû, *Adawât An-Nazar Al-Ijtihâdî Al-Manshûd Fî Dû' Al-Wâqi` Al-Mu`âsir* (Techniques of Reaching Suitable Views of Legal Reasoning in the Light of Contemporary Reality), p 35.

The Imâm kept resisting this distress in the times of Al-Ma'mûn, Al-Mu`tasim and Al-Wâthiq, respectively, over the period 218-232 A.H. In 232 A.H., Al-Mutawakkil came to power, and he gave people the free choice and stopped promoting the allegation of the creation of the Qur'ân.

Given that such torture was inflicted upon the four Great Imâms, while they were the most distinguished among all Muslims in knowledge, *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) and piety, then severer torture and intimidation would no doubt have been inflicted upon others.

The Crisis of the Muslim Intellect

Before *Ijtihâd* was obstructed, it had such characteristics as the following:

First, the *Ijtihâd* of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, was based on the invaluable instruction of the Prophet (PBUH):

> *"You should make it (i.e. Ijtihâd) as counsel between the pious (scholars) among the believers."*[1]

This instruction was implemented by the *Fiqh* scholars among the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. But after the historical decline of the great Islamic state, this direction completely disappeared. Although one duty of a ruler is to consult the pious scholars, governments, as we can see, have deviated from the doctrines of the Prophet (PBUH). The state was utterly separated from *Da'wah* (i.e. exhortation to reform in accordance with the Islamic teachings), and the gap between the academic and the governmental institutions widened, while the state should, in reality, act to serve and improve *Da'wah* endeavors. Thus, only the individual efforts of *Ijtihâd* by the extraordinary scholars have prevailed.

Second, any scrutiny of the scholars' *Ijtihâd* after the regression of the Islamic state uncovers a lot of questions relating to marriage, divorce, breaking oaths and acts of worship, while there are only a few issues con-

(1) Related by At-Tabarânî, *Al-Awsat* (The Medium), 11/371.

cerning the nation as a whole and the relation between the society and the governments. Sheikh Muhammad Al-Khudarî wondered, "It is amazing that they (i.e. scholars of the time) concentrated on three subjects as the basis for hundreds of issues which they were highly concerned to answer: Slaves and how to deal with them, wives and divorce, and finally oath taking and breaking.

Regarding slaves, it seemed as if they owned so many slaves that they paid excessive attention to clarify the rulings pertaining to them. Every *Fiqhî* chapter on transactions consisted mostly of questions including a slave man or woman, such as chapters on sales, lease, partnership, mortgage, will, emancipation, etc.

As for divorce, I tried hard to discover what made them think about the questions which they formulated, but I failed. If they were realistic questions, we could say that they were preparing answers for all possible incidents so that a *Mufti* or a judge would not be confused if asked about them. But, inasmuch as they were impossible to envisage, we feel great sorrow over the years spent on studying such questions.

In relation to oaths and vows, there was a sea of questions concerning them. One finds their writings full of too much disparity about this topic, as if they (i.e. scholars) formulated as many questions they could imagine about oaths and then tried to answer them, even though this matter involves different conventions in different countries.[1]

Prohibiting the practice of *Ijtihâd* has had negative effects on the Islamic thought in general, and the *Fiqhî* discipline in particular. Vigor and originality have been lost in the subsequent intellectual production, and we only have very traditional and trite writings. This applies not only to books on *Fiqh*, but also to all kinds of thought and creativity. Nevertheless, from time to time, there appears some intellectual work which tries to go beyond the prevailing traditions and break free from the legacy of inactivity which has afflicted the *Fiqhî* and Islamic thought.

(1) See *Târîkh At-Tashrî' Al-Islâmî* (History of the Islamic Legislation), pp. 273-274.

Here are some of the effects that resulted from the restriction of *Ijtihâd*:

1. **The rupture between the *Da'wah* and the state increased:** Upon the restriction of *Ijtihâd*, which was an aftermath of the divorce between the *Da'wah* and the state, the gap between them increasingly widened. The separation was deepened between the government and the scholarly institutions, except for the government's attempts to keep scholars under full control. This is undeniably evident from the prisons which are full of political opponents of the government and the torture used against scholars who do not comply with the state's policies and approaches.

2. **There emerged a gap between *Sharî'ah* and reality:** *Ijtihâd* plays an important role in meeting the practical need for rulings, *Fatwâs* and guidelines necessary to correct our lives and pursue the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, whose first goal is to move human beings out from the darkness of polytheism and wrongdoings into the light of monotheism and uprightness. After the cessation of *Ijtihâd*, the opinions of the past scholars have not been reviewed or substituted by modern opinions relevant to the present day life styles, which are quite different from those of the past. Hence, Allah's *Sharî'ah* has become mere theoretical ideas unable to positively affect people or reshape their lives. Even the divinely revealed texts, on points which require some *Ijtihâd*, have been understood in a completely bewildering way.

   That is why Ibnul-Qayyim wrote in his book titled *I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în* (i.e. Informing *Muftis*) that:

   - It is necessary to "ponder on the practical facts and make inferences about the truth of things from the available information, clues and evidence. A real scholar is one who uses his understanding and insight of factual reality to discover the preponderant ruling given by Allah and His Messenger (concerning a particular matter), exactly like when the witness in favor of Yûsuf (i.e. Joseph)[1] inferred from the cut in the back of his shirt that he was

(1) When a woman accused Yûsuf (Joseph) of having tried to assault her and he denied, a man from her family suggested that if Yûsuf's shirt was cut from the front, then she would be truthful, but if it was cut from the back, Yûsuf would be truthful. They found that the shirt was cut from the back.

innocent and telling the truth, and, similarly, when Sulaymân (i.e. Solomon)[1] knew the real mother by saying, 'Give me a knife to cut the baby in half between the two of you.'"[2]

- *Fatwâs* change depending on the change of time, place, circumstances, intentions and outcomes. The wisdom behind this is that the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is based on attaining good for the people, both in their daily life and their religion. He wrote, "This is a very useful Chapter. Because of the lack of knowledge about it, *Sharî'ah* has been subject to stark misunderstandings. This has caused a lot of difficulties and exorbitant obligations which the purified *Sharî'ah*, with its concern about the best interests of the people, does not involve. Surely, the underlying principle of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is wisdom and the good of the people, both in their daily affairs and in their religion. It is perfectly just, cares perfectly for the interests of people and perfectly wise. Any case that goes beyond the limits of justice, leniency, benevolence or wisdom should not be included in the *Sharî'ah*, even if it is incorporated into it by means of interpretation. *Sharî'ah* is Allah's Fair Judgment and Mercy on His creation, as well as His Wisdom which guides completely to Him and proves the truthfulness of His Messenger (PBUH)."[3]

This gap between *Sharî'ah* and reality has been caused primarily by giving up the study of *Fiqhî* issues on the one hand, and sticking to the opinions of the past scholars, such as the *Fatwâ* on using force to seize power, on the other hand.

Here, a question arises about how Muslims could live over 10 centuries on the products of the early centuries. As far back as the 8th *Hijrî* century, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî (790 A.H.), may Allah confer mercy upon him, cautioned that "The *Sharî'ah* is at risk", and demanded great efforts to preserve it,

(1) Two women disputed over being the mother of a child. In order to know the true mother, Prophet Sulaymân (Solomon) judged that the child would be cut in half between them. The real mother chose to leave the child for the other woman in order to protect him from being killed.

(2) *I'lâm Al-Mwaqqi'în* (Informing *Muftis*), 1/87.

(3) Ibid., 3/3.

because the prohibition of *Ijtihâd* threatened the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and the unity of Muslims as well. He maintained that "the *Shar'î* regulations are determined to fulfill the interests of people, both in the short- and long-term"[1] and that "the *Shar'î* purpose of such regulations is to prevent the authorities from using their subjective and personal judgments, so that they would be willingly obedient to Allah, exactly as they are obligated to be obedient to Him."[2]

Since the Islamic state was still powerful and prevailing, Ash-Shâṯibî and his predecessors did not talk about the unity of Muslims. They just expressed the goals of *Sharî'ah* in a precautionary, not binding, manner. But today, our scholars should ask themselves: How about the unity of Muslims? Where is their powerful state? What *Sharî'ah* do they enforce? This will be a first step towards a solution for the crisis of the Muslim intellect.

If one is blind to his reality, then he cannot worship Allah duly and utterly. Further, if one deals with the Qur'anic texts and authentic *Haḏîths* separate from the understanding of the facts of reality, then he would not be able to enforce *Ijtihâd* and change. The study of the society and the understanding of its reality, history, culture and social properties is the way to know how to deal with it and correct its practices in accordance with the Divine Laws. However, if the movement to reform does not take account of reality when planning its actions, it will end up in one of three possibilities: Slowing down, failure or, ultimately, violence.

Sheikh Al-Qaradâwî summarized the crisis of how to deal with reality when he wrote, "We see the narrow-minded Faqîhs (i.e. *Fiqh* scholars) quarrelling over compromising, controversial or non-urgent matters while they ignore crucial issues relating to the entire Islamic existence. Those are people who may not lack the knowledge of *Fiqh*, but while they can really be described as scholars, they are not actually *Faqîhs*."[3]

(1) Ash-Shâṯibî, *Al-Muwâfaqât Fî Asûl Al-Aḫkâm* (The Consensus about the Fundamentals of Rulings), 2/6.

(2) Ibid., 2/168

(3) 'Umar 'Ubayd Ḫasanah, *Fiqh Ad-Da'wah.. Malâmiḫ Wâ Âfâq* (the *Fiqh* of *Da'wah*.. Insights and Prospects), 2/188.

The Concept of *Jâhiliyyah*: A Wrong Perception

There are "*Shar'î*" grounds underlying extremism, whether connected with violence, accusing others of disbelief, etc. The first and most important ground is the misperception that the present Islamic society and lifestyle is deemed to be "*Jâhiliyyah*"[1], like the *Jâhiliyyah* in which the Arabs lived before the mission of Islam was revealed. Such a judgment deals with the contemporary Muslims as if they are equal to the disbelievers and polytheists at the time of Revelation, not just how it deals with the non-Muslims.

Perhaps the first one to use this description was Sayyid Quṯb, may Allah confer mercy upon him. He believed that we "live today in a *Jâhiliyyah* like that which preceded the advent of Islam, or may be even worse. Everything around us is (characterized by) *Jâhiliyyah*: Peoples' conceptions, beliefs, customs and traditions, sources of culture, art and literature, laws and legislations. In fact, a great deal of what we think to be Islamic culture, books, philosophy and ideology is even the product of *Jâhiliyyah*! That is why the Islamic values are not fully absorbed by our hearts and a sound perception of Islam is not formulated by our minds. We cannot create a large generation of the same model as produced by Islam at its early times."[2]

Generalizing descriptions of *Jâhiliyyah* against the entire society causes dangerous effects on the method of change, which is determined by the perception of the present conditions. When the perception is characterized in such a way, the method of change will be complicated as it would entail altering this state of *Jâhiliyyah*. In this sense, Sayyid Quṯb wrote, "The first step on our way is to disdain this society of *Jâhiliyyah* with its values and thoughts. We should never adopt our values and thoughts to conform with theirs, at all! They and we are at a crossroad. Once we go hand in hand with them, even to a small extent, we will inevitably lose the whole methodology and miss our way ahead!"[3]

(1) The pre-Islamic period of ignorance.

(2) Sayyid Quṯb, *Ma'âlim 'Alâ Aṯ-Ṯarîq* (Milestones), Beirut, Dâr Ash-Shurûq, 1993, p. 21.

(3) Ibid., p. 22.

Accordingly, Sayyid Quṭb exhorts the Islamic action to "counteract such a reality with tools suitable for it - carrying out dialogue and communication to correct beliefs and ideas, and using power and *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in Allah's cause) to overthrow the regimes and governments which prevent the populations from reshaping their beliefs and conceptions..."(1)

Making generalizations of *Jâhiliyyah* is an easy way to make accusations of disbelief and be extremist and violent against others. This implies that "all people are astray as long as they do not adopt what we believe in."

It was not arbitrary that we gave an overview of the history of the Muslim nation at the beginning of this paper. This was intended to clarify the dramatic shifts experienced by the Muslim nation and explore what contemporary Muslims have inherited. It would be a big mistake to describe the contemporary Muslim society as being that of true Muslims. Yet, it would be unfair to label it as being a *Jâhiliyyah* society. The Islamic life always has many good aspects. The true faith is inherent in Muslims' hearts and shows itself in their behavior, morality, solidarity, philanthropy, zeal for their religion (though they do not carefully observe its teachings), fear of Allah and honor of their Prophet (PBUH). "If there were among the Muslims a despot, immodest women and hypocrites, can we judge the whole nation to be in a state of *Jâhiliyyah*? Our religion, its long history, the *Hadîths* of the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions, and the early transition from *Jâhiliyyah* to Islam at the time of Revelation, all indicate that Islam has never been living in a secluded area of purified angels away from an area of devils and disbelievers. Indeed, anyone testifying that there is no deity but Allah and believing in His Oneness and in the prophethood and message of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would be deemed to have entered Islam and renounced disbelief.

Nevertheless, has the Muslim society ever been completely free from the traditions of *Jâhiliyyah*? Was the early Muslim society utterly purified from the influences of *Jâhiliyyah* to the extent that the present and future Islamic society is expected to show angelic innocence, otherwise it would be accused of *Jâhiliyyah*, disbelief and going astray?"(2)

(1) Ibid., p. 64.

(2) 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, *Tanwîr Al-Mu'minât* (Enlightening the Believing Women), 1/152-153.

A reader may ask: If the current Muslim society is not described as being in *Jâhiliyyah*, How can it be described, then, if it is not perfectly Islamic?

Mr. 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn gives a Qur'anic and Prophetic description of the current state of Muslims. He wrote, "If it happens that right is confused with wrong, that Islam replaces *Jâhiliyyah* but some wrong actions still occur, or *Jâhiliyyah* attacks and affects Islam, then this is a *Fitnah* (i.e. a trial which endangers Muslims). Fitnah is a substantial concept concerning which there is a Prophetic guideline. If it takes place, we should be precautious, wise and observe the preponderant opinion."(1)

Our Need for a *Fiqhî* System Based on the Leniency of the Prophet

In the Biography of the Prophet (PBUH), there are demonstrations of the basic features and methodology of the Islamic *Da'wah*. When such features and guidelines are considered and well-understood, we can derive that the approach of *Fiqh* is lenient, one that enables us to carry out *Da'wah* in modern times and make it attract a lot of people to embrace Islam.

Any overview of the honorable biography of the Prophet (PBUH) will reveal that he always addressed people depending on their level of understanding and capabilities, showed consideration for their conditions and needs, his orders were lenient and he exempted them from any difficulties. Here are some basic features of the Prophetic *Da'wah*, which should be considered and used as a perfect, practical plan when carrying out *Da'wah*, calling others to Allah, Exalted be He.

1. Address People at their level of understanding and Awareness

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was most aware of peoples' level of understanding, and so he addressed them accordingly. Al-Bukhârî related that 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Talk to people using what they know (i.e. understand). (Otherwise,) do you like Allah and His Messenger to be denied?"(2)

(1) 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, *Al-'Adl, Al-Islâmyyiûn Wâ Al-Hukm* (Justice, Islamists and The Rule), p. 488.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-'Ilm* (Knowledge).

Another example was narrated by Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, that a man said, "O Messenger of Allah! Teach me a piece of advice and make it brief." The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Perform prayer as if you are going to die (after performing it). If you do not see Allah, (then be sure that) He sees you. Do not covet what other people have, so you will live a rich(contented) man. Do not ever commit something you would regret (and thus need to repent from it)."(1)

The man asked the Prophet (PBUH) to tell him some brief advice, so the Prophet took into consideration the man's limited understanding and gave him just three instructions.

A desert Arab came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "Teach me some words which I should utter (often)." He (PBUH) said:

"Say: 'There is no god but Allah, the One, having no partner with Him. Allah is the Greatest of the great and all praise is due to him. Hallowed be Allah, the Lord of the worlds. There is no Might and Power save with Allah, the All Powerful and the All-Wise'."

The man said, "These (words) are for my Lord. But what about me?" Thereupon, he (the Prophet) said:

"Say: O Allah! Forgive me, have mercy upon me, direct me to righteousness and provide me with sustenance."(2)

Here, known to be hotheaded and shallow-minded, the Bedouin said, "These (words) are for my Lord. But what about me?" However, the Prophet (PBUH) did not rebuke him and taught him another supplication that was suitable for his level of understanding. The Prophet (PBUH), wisely, did not teach him something that more than he could withstand or could make him feel resentful of Islam.

(1) At-Tabarânî, *Al-Awsat* (the Medium), 4244.

(2) *Sahîh Muslim*, The Explanation of An-Nawawî, the Chapter on *At-Tahlîl Wâ At-Tasbîh Wâ Ad-Du'â'* (Virtues of Extolment, Glorification and Supplication), 17/19.

By the same token, there is a well-known story of a Bedouin who urinated in the mosque and how the Prophet (PBUH) dealt with the situation wisely and gently.

Yazîd Ibn Salamah, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "O Allah's Messenger! I have heard many sayings from you and I fear that I might forget them, so give me a comprehensive statement." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said:

> *"Fear Allah concerning all that you know!"*[1]

Yazîd Ibn Salamah asked for a comprehensive instruction so that he would not need to remember all the previous teachings of the Prophet (PBUH), and even if he forgot them, that instruction would suffice him. The Prophet (PBUH) answered him that he was not accountable for what he would forget or did not know. Indeed, this was a perfectly concise and eloquent statement.

2. Address People Depending on Their Capabilities

Umm Hâni', may Allah be pleased with her, reported that she went to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and said, "O Allah's Messenger! Direct me to something (good) to do, for I have grown old, weak and fat." He (PBUH) said:

> *"Say: 'Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)' one hundred times; 'Al-Hamdu Lillah (All praise is due to Allah)' one hundred times; and 'Subhân Allah (Glorified be Allah)' one hundred times. These statements are better (in reward) than one hundred saddled and bridled horses used in Allah's Cause; one hundred sacrificed camels; and one hundred freed slaves."*[2]

This *Hadîth* requires no comment: An old, weak woman could no longer perform a lot of worship, so the Prophet (PBUH) guided her to carry out something suitable for her old age and state of weakness, which is better than one hundred saddled and bridled horses used in Allah's Cause, one hundred sacrificed camels and one hundred freed slaves.

(1) Sunan At-Tirmidhî, 2682.

(2) *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, 3810; Al-Bayhaqî, *Shu'ab Al-Îmân* (Branches of Faith), 2682.

'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr Ibnul-'Âs, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

"We were sitting with Allah's Messenger and a young man came and said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Can I kiss (my wife) while I am fasting?' The Prophet replied, 'No.' Then an old man came and asked, 'O Allah's Messenger! Can I kiss (my wife) while I am fasting?' The Prophet replied, 'Yes.' Then, we looked at each other, so Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'I know why you have looked at each other. (I said so because) the old man can control his desires.'"(1)

The Prophet (PBUH) took into consideration that an old man has more self-control than a young man.

'Â'ishah, the Mother of the Believers, may Allah be pleased with her, said:

"O Allah's Messenger! We consider Jihâd (i.e. fighting in Allah's Cause) as the best deed. Should we (i.e. women) not fight in Allah's Cause?" He (PBUH) said, "No, but the best Jihâd (for women) is Mabrûr Hajj (i.e. Hajj which is done according to the Prophet's Sunnah and is accepted by Allah)."(2)

Accordingly, women are not deprived of the reward of *Jihâd*, as the best kind of *Jihâd* for them is performing *Hajj*.

Indeed, Allah says:

{"Verily, there has come unto you a messenger (Muhammad; PBUH) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). It grieves him that you suffer. (He is) anxious over you (i.e. your guidance) and to the believers is kind and merciful."}

[At-Tawbah (Repentance): 128]

'Abdur-Rahmân Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn Ka'b Ibn Mâlik said that when Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, sent down a Qur'anic verse regarding poetry(3), Ka'b Ibn Mâlik came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said:

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(1) Imâm Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, 6751, 7074.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Hajj*.

(3) Namely, the verse: ***{"And (as for) the poets, (only) the deviators follow them."}*** [Ash-Shu'arâ' (The Poets): 224]

"Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, has sent down concerning poetry (a judgment) that you know. So how do you think about this (i.e. how can we manage to comply with that judgment)?" The Prophet said, "The believer fights with both his sword and his tongue."(1)

As we can see in these examples, forms of *Jihâd* differ according to the audiences' capabilities and qualifications!

Abû Dharr Al-Ghifârî, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that some of the people from among the Prophet's Companions said to him (PBUH):

"O Messenger of Allah! The rich have taken away the reward. They observe prayer as we do, they fast as we do and they give charity out of their surplus wealth." Upon this, he (the Prophet) said, "Has Allah not prescribed for you (a course) by which you can (also) give in charity? (That is,) in every Tasbîh (i.e. saying: Subhân Allah; Glorified be Allah), there is a reward; in every Tahmîd (i.e. saying: Al-Hamdu Lillah; all praise is due to Allah), there is a reward; in every Tahlîl (i.e. saying: Lâ Ilâh Illâ Allah; there is no god but Allah), there is a reward; and in enjoining good, there is a reward; in forbidding evil, there is a reward; and in man's sexual intercourse (with his wife), there is a reward." The Companions said, "O Messenger of Allah! Is there a reward for the one who satisfies his sexual desire?" He said, "Tell me, if he were to direct it (i.e. his sexual desire) to something forbidden, would it be a sin on his part? Similarly, if he directs it to something lawful, he will have a reward."(2)

Those Companions had nothing to pay in charity while the wealthy Companions performed the same acts of worship but also gave charity, and consequently had a greater reward. Considering their limited capabilities, the Prophet (PBUH) recommended for them simple acts of worship that made them receive as great a reward as charity.

(1) Related by Imâm Ahmad

(2) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on *Zakâh* (Alms).

3. Show Consideration for People's Conditions

Just as the Prophet (PBUH) addressed and dealt with people according to their level of understanding and capabilities, he also considered their circumstances, whether good or bad. Obviously, things that are not appropriate in case of ease may be acceptable in case of difficulty. The Qur'anic legislations involve many examples of this:

The Prophet (PBUH) suspended executing the penalty of theft in wartime so that Muslims would preserve their good positions (in the battle) and strong force. Junâdah Ibn Abû Umayyah said:

> *"We were (traveling) with Busr Ibn Artâh at sea when a thief called Misdar was held because he had stolen a camel. He (i.e. Busr) said, 'I heard Allah's Messenger saying: Hands are not to be cut off (as a legal penalty for theft) during travel. Had it not been for this reason, I would have cut off his hand'."*[1]

In *Sharh Al-Jâmi' As-Saghîr* (i.e. Explanation of the Small Book of Compiled Works), Al-'Azîzî wrote, "The phrase: 'during travel' means traveling for *Jihâd*, lest the man who had his hand cut off would be able to join the army of the enemy. When they (i.e. the Muslim army) returned home, the thief's hand would be cut off. This is also maintained by Al-Awzâ'î."[2]

In the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH), a man had a wet dream and the others ordered him to take a *Ghusl* (i.e. ritual bath), although he had a wound. He died due to washing his wound. When the Prophet (PBUH) knew about this, he said:

> *"They killed him; may Allah kill them! Is not inquiry the cure for ignorance?"*[3]

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, the Chapter on *Al-Hudûd* (Legal Penalties), the section of "Would a Thief Who Steals During War Be Punished by Cutting His Hand?"

(2) *'Awn Al-Ma'bûd Fî Sharh Abû Dâwûd* (Assistance from the Worshipped in the Explanation of Abû Dâwûd), 12/82.

(3) Imâm Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, 3057; *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, 572.

Abû Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

> *"Once, a member of the Prophet's household died, so women gathered, weeping the death of that person. (On witnessing that,) 'Umar reproached these women and tried to drive them away, but the Prophet (PBUH) said to him, 'Leave them, O 'Umar! Verily, the eye is tearful, the heart is broken, and the time (of death of the person) is recent.'"*(1)

Here, the Prophet (PBUH) appreciated the emotional state which these women were experiencing because of the death of their beloved relative. So, he ordered 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, to leave them alone.

The Prophet (PBUH) also taught us how to sympathize with any Muslim if he became ill. He (PBUH) visited a patient and asked him:

> *"What do you wish (to have)?" The man said, "I wish (to eat) wheat bread." The Prophet said, "Whoever (of you) has wheat bread can send it to his brother (i.e., this man)." Then, the Prophet said, "When any of your patients wish (to eat) something, you should give it to him ."*(2)

4. Respect People's Needs and Be Lenient with Them

Islam came as a mercy for the whole world; it satisfies people's needs as long as they are not in conflict with the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. Here are some examples taken from the honorable *Sunnah*.

The Prophet (PBUH) enjoined people to pay *Zakâtul-Fitr* (i.e. obligatory charity paid on the Fast-Breaking Feast) before they left to perform the *'Îd* (i.e. Feast) prayer. He (PBUH) said:

> *"Save them (i.e. the poor) the trouble of asking (for charity on that day)."*(3)

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(1) Related by An-Nasâ'î, the Chapter on *Al-Janâ'iz* (Funerals).

(2) *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, 1439, 3440.

(3) Ibn Rushd, *Bidâyat Al-Mujtahid Wâ Nihâyat Al-Muqtasid* (the Beginning of *Al-Mujtahid* and the End of *Al-Muqtasid*), 1/281.

The Prophet (PBUH) was always thoughtful and considered people's needs. Here, he appreciated the need of the poor and thus instructed Muslims to pay *Zakâtul-Fitr* during the early hours of the Feast, so that the poor did not need to beg in the streets for money and food.[1]

Jâbir Ibn 'Abdullah Al-Ansârî, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

> *"Once a man was driving two camels and night had fallen. He found Mu'âdh praying so he made his camels kneel down and joined him in the prayer. Mu'âdh recited the Sura of Al-Baqarah (i.e. The Cow) or the Sura of An-Nisâ' (i.e. Women), so the man left the prayer and went away. When he came to know that Mu'âdh criticized him (for leaving the prayer), he went to the Prophet (PBUH) and complained about Mu'âdh. The Prophet said thrice, 'O Mu'âdh! Are you putting people to trial? It would have been better if you had recited Sabbih Ism Rabbik Al-A'lâ (i.e. Sura of Al-A'lâ; The Most Exalted), Wa Ash-Shams Wa Duhâhâ (i.e. Sura of Ash-Shams; The Sun), or Wa Al-Layl Idhâ Yaghshâ (i.e. Sura of Al-Layl; The Night), for (among those who) pray behind you are the old, the weak and the one who has some need'."*[2]

In another narration, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"When any of you leads the people in prayer, he should not prolong prayer for among them are the weak, the sick and the aged. But when one of you prays by himself, he may prolong (the prayer) as he likes."*[3]

The Prophet (PBUH) demanded mercy for those with special needs like the young, the old, the weak, the ill and the busy - surely, this shows the mercy and tolerance of Islam!

In the following *Hadith*, you can see a demonstration of the greatness of Islam:

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(1) As-San'ânî, *Subul As-Salâm* (The Ways to Peace), 2/282.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

(3) *Fath Al-Bârî* (the Bestowal of the Creator), 702.

"Abû Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, 'O Allah's Messenger! I have been ruined'! The Messenger asked, 'What caused you to be ruined?' The man replied, 'I had a sexual intercourse with my wife during the day in Ramadân (i.e. while I was fasting)'. Allah's Messenger asked him, 'Can you afford to manumit a slave?' The man replied in the negative. The Messenger asked him, 'Can you fast for two successive months?' The man replied in the negative. The Messenger asked him, 'Can you afford to feed sixty poor persons?' The man replied in the negative. Then, the Messenger brought a basket full of dates to the man and said, 'Take this (basket of dates) and give it in charity'. The man said, 'Should I give it to a person poorer than I? By Allah, there is no family between its (i.e. Medina's) two mountains who are poorer than my (family)'. The Messenger smiled till his premolar teeth became visible and he said, 'Feed your family with it'."[1]

The aforementioned Hadîth, and other similar Hadîths, show broad horizons for the *Da'wah*, calling others to Allah, Glory be to Him, concerning mercy, leniency and gentleness. Indeed, efforts in *Da'wah* greatly need such splendid examples!

Abû Dharr Al-Ghifârî, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated,

"We were with the Prophet (PBUH) on a journey and the muezzin wanted to pronounce the Adhân (i.e. call for prayer) for the Zuhr (i.e. noon) prayer. The Prophet said, 'Delay the prayer till it gets cooler'. After a while, he wanted to pronounce the Adhân, but the Prophet said to him, 'Delay the prayer till it gets cooler'. (This continued) till we saw the shadows of hillocks. The Prophet added, 'The severity of heat is from the heat of the Hellfire; so if it gets hot, delay the prayer'."[2]

(1) ***Sharh An-Nawawî 'Alâ Sahîh Muslim*** **(An-Nawawî's Explanation of Sahîh Muslim), the Chapter on the Impermissibility of Having Sexual Intercourse on the Days of Ramadân and the Obligation of offering Major Expiation for It, 7/235.**

(2) ***Fath Al-Bârî*** **(the Bestowal of the Creator), 535, 539;** ***Sharh An-Nawawî 'Alâ Sahîh Muslim*** **(An-Nawawî's Explanation of Sahîh Muslim), the Chapter on** ***Istihbâb Al-Ibrâd Bi Az-Zuhr*** **(Preferability of Delaying the Zuhr Prayer Till It Gets Cooler), 5/119.**

The wisdom behind the *Hadîth* is to protect the body against the extreme heat of midday.

'Imrân Ibn Husayn, may Allah be pleased with him, had piles, so he asked the Prophet (PBUH) about the prayer. He (PBUH) said:

> *"Pray while standing and if you cannot, pray while sitting and if you cannot, then pray lying on your side."*(1)

5. Facilitate Things and Exempt People from Difficulty

The Islamic *Sharî'ah* is uniquely characterized by mitigating any difficulties. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"...And (Allah) has not laid upon you in religion any hardship..."}*** [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 78]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Facilitate (things for people concerning religious matters), do not make it hard (for them), comfort (them with good tidings), and do not make (them) run away (from Islam)."*(2)

Abû Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

> *"A desert Arab urinated in the mosque, and people rushed to beat him. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'Leave him and pour a bucket – or a tumbler – of water over the place where he has urinated. You have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them.'"*(3)

The Prophet's relieving encumbrance was never hidden or specific for certain persons, but it applied to every living being. Al-Azraq Ibn Qays said, "We were by a nearly dry river at Al-Ahwâz. Abû Barzah Al-Aslamî came riding a horse. Then he left the horse and went to perform prayer. The horse ran away, so he interrupted his prayer and tried to catch it. He

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, *Fath Al-Bârî* (the Bestowal of the Creator), 1117; Imâm Ahmad, *Al-Musnad*, 19840; *Sunan Ibn Mâjah*, 1223.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, *Fath Al-Bârî* (the Bestowal of the Creator), 6125.

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî, *Fath Al-Bârî* (the Bestowal of the Creator), 6128.

brought it back and then went to perform the prayer. A wise man said, 'Look at that Sheikh (i.e. Abû Barzah)! He left the prayer for a horse!' Abû Barzah said, 'Nobody has reproved me since I left Allah's Messenger (PBUH)'. He added, 'My house is so far away, so if I completed my prayer and let the horse run away, I would not reach my house till it gets dark'. Abû Barzah mentioned that he accompanied the Prophet (PBUH) and witnessed many aspects of his leniency and relieving encumbrance."[1]

Violence and the Retribution in the Hereafter

As violence causes the Islamic *Da'wah* to be transformed from a mission of mercy into a disastrous dogma, from a unique and constructive civilization into a collapsing and lethal one, using violence will bring forth the wrath and punishment of Allah. Perpetrators of violence sin as they transgress others' lives and honors, so they will experience a difficult situation on the Day of Judgment, when they will be in dire need of any reward. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) always warned people against extremism, violence and rebellion. He urged others to be merciful, tolerant and control themselves, both with Muslims and non-Muslims.

Here are some prohibitions in Islam:

1. Adopting Violence

The emergence of Muslim groups adopting violence as a methodology is probably the product of defective personalities which could not be cured or refined by means of spiritual faith. They might have not considered the consequences of such violence. This leads to failure, and, in turn, to violence.

Abû Umâmah Al-Bâhilî, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Indeed Allah is kind and He loves kindness and confers for kindness that which he does not confer for violence."*[2]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, *Fath Al-Bârî* (the Bestowal of the Creator), 6127.

(2) At-Tabarânî, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabîr* (the Great Lexicon), No. 7475, 8/95.

Given that Allah, Exalted and Glorified be He, does not accept violence, He necessarily does not accept or grant a reward for any deeds that result in violence. In fact, Allah, Exalted be He, does not help anyone who commits violence.

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Kindness involves abundance (i.e. good) and blessings, and he who is deprived of it (i.e. kindness) is (in fact) deprived of much good."*[1]

No one should think that kindness is required only with other Muslims. 'Âishah, may Allah be pleased with her, narrated:

> *"A group of Jews came to Allah's Messenger and said, 'As-Sâmu 'Alaykum (i.e. death be on you) (instead of saying, As-Slâmu 'Alaykum).' I understood it and so I said to them, "Alaykum As-Sâmu Wâ Al-La'nah (i.e. death and curse be on you).' Allah's Messenger said, 'Calm down, O 'Âishah! Allah loves (that one uses) kindness in all matters.' I said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Have you not heard what they have said?' Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'I have (already) said (to them) Wâ 'Alaykum (i.e. and upon you).'"*[2]

This is a real example of kindness; we use kindness (without being apathetic about our religion) with everyone, even the bad people and disbelievers. Obviously, making accusations of disbelief and deviation are not acts of kindness.

2. Illegally Shedding Blood

Ibn Mas'ûd, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"The first (thing) that will be resolved among the people on the Day of Judgment will be the shedding of blood."*[3]

(1) Ibid., No. 2458, 2/348.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-Adab* (Etiquette), the section of "Kindness in Everything", No. 5565.

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Ad-Diyât* (Blood Money), the section of "To Seek Someone's Blood Illegally", No. 6374.

Any bloodshed committed without a legal right will cause the committer to deserve Allah's punishment.

Ibn 'Abbâs, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"The persons most hated by Allah are three: (1) a transgressor in the Sacred Lands (the sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina); (2) a person who seeks that the traditions of the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance should remain in Islam; and (3) a person who tries to shed somebody's blood without any right."*[1]

Also, bloodshed due to *Jihâd* or the punishment for doing wrong is not permitted to be carried out by individuals and groups. It is a duty of those in charge of the affairs of the Muslims within a society where the Islamic system is enforced.

It would be wrong to take the meaning of bloodshed here as just referring to Muslims; prohibition of bloodshed applies both to Muslims and non-Muslims. Actually, we need to address such *Hadîths* in order to be aware of our responsibilities towards humanity. Allah, the Almighty, describes His true servants saying:

> ***{"...Nor (do they) kill the soul whom Allah has forbidden (to be killed) except for a just cause..."}***
>
> [Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 68]

3. Killing a *Mu'âhad*[2]

Islam organizes every aspect of human life. In a world as diverse and intermingled as it is today, many international conventions and treaties are needed. Although in the current international sphere it is usual that covenants are broken and the rights of others are violated, Islam has prescribed a strict punishment for killing a person who is protected by any official agreement. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Ad-Diyât* (Blood Money).

(2) A person who is granted the pledge of protection by a Muslim state.

"Whoever killed a Mu`âhad shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years."[1]

The key purposes of the Islamic *Sharî`ah* is to achieve human interaction, cooperation and integration, even with others who have a different religion. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"O mankind! We have created you from male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious one. Surely, Allah is the All-Knower, All-Aware."} [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Having relations with non-Muslims is not forbidden by the Holy Qur'ân. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who do not fight against you on account of (your) religion or drive you out of your homes. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.} [Al-Mumtahinah (The Woman Tested): 8]

Another instruction facilitating peaceful interaction is found in the following verse:

{"And insult not those whom they (i.e. disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to all the people their own deeds; then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do."}

[Al-An`âm (Cattle): 108]

The model of cooperation and integration is the best compromise that should be adopted mutually by both the Muslims and the People of other Heavenly Religions. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-Jizyah Wâ Al-Muâda`ah* (Tributes and Making Peace).

{"Say (O Muhammad): "O people of the Scripture (i.e. Jews and Christians)! Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we shall worship none but Allah (alone), and that we shall associate none with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords beside Allah." Then, if they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 64]

Today, such teachings are the underlying principles of international agreements and treaties. Preserving and fulfilling promises was a characteristic of the Prophet (PBUH). He said:

"I do not break any covenant or imprison messengers (from any leader etc.)."[1]

At the end of this paper, it is worth mentioning that just reading books, Prophetic *Hadîths* and even the Qur'anic verses revealed by Allah to clarify everything is not enough to intellectually comprehend such meanings. Though indispensable, such readings should be combined with continuous education that enlightens, guides and protects devout Muslims against any troubles that arise from adopting such approaches.

The problem of the youth dealing roughly and unmercifully with others is probably the greatest challenge facing the modern Islamic movement. This requires activist groups to make the Prophetic education a first priority in their programs. In addition, it is necessary for scholars and thinkers to understand (and take into consideration) the dramatic shifts in the history of the Islamic nation, rather than indulge in debates about subsidiary issues and details, which only cause the problem of extremism to become even worse.



(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd.

When Despotism Creates Violence



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Violence and extremism are results of the combination of different factors including political despotism, social oppression and the use of the Sharî'ah to cover up or justify tyranny, in addition to what follows from this with regards to religious and cultural conflicts, attempts to dominate as well as eradicate the national identity. These actions are due to a combination of false beliefs, injustice and occupation. There is no way out of such consequences except by resorting to discussions and consultations with the aim of preventing and treating the problem.

Diversity is a cosmic law and a biological fact that continues to exist in life because it originated with the creation of the world. In clarifying this fact, Allah says:

> *{"Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black. And among people and moving creatures (there is variety), and grazing livestock similarly have various colors. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge..."}*
>
> [Fâṭir (The Originator): 27, 28]

Among the accompaniments and fruits of this truth is the phenomenon known as "cultural interaction" which is governed by the principles of social movements and factors that result in the constant revival and deterioration of civilizations. The cultural interaction may lead to such phenomena as the "civilizational mobility" and "the alternation of civilizations" which some may call "civilizational cycles".

The universal phenomenon of cultural interaction is not a frivolous or random process but one ruled by laws and social factors which require comprehensive and operative skills if one is to manipulate these laws so as to make some laws outweigh others. In gaining such control, one is able to play a positive, cultural role, act for the benefit of civilization and turn differences and disagreements into a source of enrichment and an arena for competition, discussion and coexistence so as to establish common human principles.

It also leads to the acceptance or tolerance of diversity, which is something that has existed from the beginning of creation and that allows one to accept different particularities and cultural identities. Accepting diversity allows one to accept different cultural particularities, identities and basics, and gives hope that this tolerance will lead to origination, communication and development.

It is worth mentioning that the interaction between different diversities is the driving force behind civilization and a fundamental cause of development, promotion, efficacy and the multiplicity of different intellects and experiences. It is, therefore, unimaginable that the entire world be similar as this would contradict the principles of life, biology, integration and the evolution of social life.

The alternation of civilizations may be one of the results of this confrontation along with its motives and social principles; Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"...And these days [of varying conditions] We alternate among the people..."}* [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 140]

Historically, civilization is a dynamic movement that is prone to change and is not restricted to a specific race, color or geographical location. Rather, civilization is characterized by a state of continual change and even exchange; this is illustrated by the fact that many dominating civilizations have become extinct when they reach a stage in which they became unable to change or to adapt and evolve. Other civilizations, on the other hand, have declined and then risen again, and it is important to note that both the decline and the ascent of civilizations are two processes that have their own laws and factors.

One of the main historical or evolutionary problems revolves around the ability to accept, manage and deal with diversity as well as to manage any confrontations between different civilizations and to tolerate human coexistence or accept 'the other' as being a contributor in building civilization, as this is a task that everyone is capable of contributing to.

An examination of the history of civilization reveals that every nation has made contributions to civilization, either at the level of the human being, who is both the origin and purpose of civilization, or at the level of the environment, in terms of geography, climate, resources, materials and even consumer markets, which accelerate the process of development and production and are, themselves, considered indicators of progress.

In virtually any case, 'the other' is a partner in creating civilization, regardless of whether they are part of a nation that acts by receiving certain cultural values or a member of a nation that serves to spread these values. If all nations were built on the same principles and programmed to perform the same tasks, there would be no need for prophethood to change and reform.

Competition within civilizations is the real arena for interaction and it allows every nation and every person the opportunity to display their capabilities and try, using different means of persuasion, to lead the course of civilization itself. The arena of the universal civilization is a place dedicated to discussion; the defense of values; the discernment between guidance and deviance, and the clarification of the principles that lead to happiness.

Historically, however, the management of these actions has taken on different forms, including the use of weapons and other physical means that have provoked and initiated different philosophies, some of which legitimized the use of power and violence to eradicate 'the other'. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter], "I will surely kill you." Said [the former], "Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me - I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds. Indeed, I want you to obtain [thereby] my sin and your sin so you will be among the companions of the Fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdo-*

ers." And his soul made it seem fair to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers."}

[Al-Mā'idah (The Table): 27-30]

Thus, at times, human history and the cycle of civilization with its laws of interaction rise to levels that befit human dignity and at other times they degenerate to the law of the jungle, corruption and bloodshed. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 30]

The Notion of Struggle

It is necessary to admit that power, violence, opposition, fighting and terrorism are all accompaniments to the progress of civilization, and that in spite of the occasional increase and decrease of these phenomena, they do not cease. They also have their principles, justifications and even their own philosophies which are based on eliminating the role of "the other" and denying his right to exist or even his right to life. Such justifications and pretexts are fueled with intimidation and exhortation, the examples of which are countless. Some of these justifications imply that fighting and conflict are the essence and basic principles of life, while peaceful periods are just short, temporary intervals to prepare for other wars. Today, however, war does not seem to need any justification due to strange pretexts such as the notions of "preemptive war", "defensive attack", "aggressive attack", "defending human rights", "seeking freedom", "protecting the rights of minorities", "seeking shelter for humans", "propagating the values of freedom and democracy" as well as "combating terrorism". Some philosophers have even suggested that wars are solutions for overpopulation, which negatively affects the resources of wealth, claiming that such resources grow progressively at a slow rate while the population rates jump exponentially.

Many dangerous philosophies have surfaced to support the ideas of conflict, opposition, hegemony and eliminating the role of "the other." Such philosophies also aim to manipulate the cycle of civilizations, scientific advance-

ment and technical production in order to achieve control, hegemony and power, and moreover aim to manipulate literary and cultural means to reinforce its power and dominance.

Violence, opposition and terrorism are, therefore, ongoing historical phenomena that occasionally rise and fall, spread and become contained, but never cease. Such phenomena are not specific to any identity, place, time or religion but exist parallel to human existence and are essentially human inventions often practiced under the pretext of religious commitment. Such philosophies reflect false religious beliefs and only serve to legitimize tyranny and hegemony.

Among the most significant motives of conflict between civilizations are pride, the urge to display power, the pleasure of having control over "the other" and attempts to subjugate a religion, civilization or nation and stigmatize them as being violent and based on terrorism, thereby justifying interference in their affairs as well as control over their resources and potentials.

Such overlords tend to insist on leaving violence, extremism and terrorism undefined so that they may continue to lay down their own definitions in order to continue justifying their acts. Further, such nations tend to practice a form of ideological terrorism against those who try to examine these phenomena, discover their reasons and study their results. They are also quick to accuse such researchers of terrorism and extremism, associate them with terrorists and fight them with all available weapons simply because they propose definitions of terrorism that these nations find disturbing or that reveal their hidden motives and agendas.

For this reason, the concepts of extremism, violence and terrorism have become ambiguous, confusing, unspecific and closer to being abstract than realistic. Indeed, those who dare to discuss such issues endanger themselves in the same way one endangers oneself by walking through a minefield, since such a discussion is strictly restricted to clients or sympathizers of the dominating nations and so-called scholars and intellectuals who advocate these dominant regimes.

We must first assert that we condemn violence, extremism, terrorism and the entire list of similar terms regardless of their origin or whether they are practiced by individuals, groups, organizations or nations. We also reject the justifications for such phenomena; but this, however, does not prevent us from studying such phenomena and inspecting their causes in an attempt to find out whether or not they do indeed exist and how they may be solved. This is important because the currently practiced means of security have proven unsuccessful and have even led to the continuation of the eruption of violence.

It is, therefore, necessary to study the existence, magnitude and causes of these phenomena and rid them of the ambiguity that has led to their confusion with *Jihâd* (Fighting in Allah's Cause) and its legitimate objectives of self-defense and resistance to occupation. We must also see if these phenomena, assuming they do exist, are common to our civilization or culture, or whether they have been contrived to justify aggression and hegemony and the use of our own people as devices for these motives.

The current atmosphere of intellectual terrorism, which surrounds the study of terrorism and threatens every thinker or researcher looking into its causes and demanding explanations for its existence, could in itself be a reaction from those who understand that such an investigation would reveal the real instigators or the real nature of terrorism at the international as well as national and individual level. Indeed it may be said that those who pretend to fight terrorism and wage war against it, are in fact those who practice it.

To restrict oneself to inspecting the consequences and effects of terrorism only allows the phenomenon to persist as its causes have not been dealt with. It also leads to the accusation of the victim, leaving the real assassin to continue his attack, thereby leaving the world with the worries, calamities, condemnations and cloudiness that continue to shroud the real identity of the murderer and the real reason behind his murders that, if disclosed, will explain all ambiguities and answer all questions.

Spreading an atmosphere of intellectual and political terrorism and accusing those who try to search for the causes of terrorism of attempting to justify terrorism leads to a fear of disclosing the real identity of the perpetrators.

This, of course, is convenient as such perpetrators only seek to interfere in other people's affairs and to dominate other countries' sovereignty, security institutions, financial systems, curriculums and mass media, and mould them according to their policy and culture under the pretext of fighting terrorism.

The phenomena of violence, extremism and terrorism or any other social or human phenomenon, whether positive or negative, cannot be evaluated and developed unless the appropriate atmosphere, reasons, capabilities and gaps exist to permit such an evaluation and development. Consequently, dealing with any kind of phenomenon appropriately can only be achieved by looking at its different dimensions; studying it and analyzing its main elements and causes; then investigating it carefully in order to understand it; and finally laying down a plan or strategy to curb its spread and treat it.

As mentioned previously, many of those who deal with social, political and human phenomena, out of ignorance or on purpose, tend to look exclusively at the effects and consequences, believing that annihilating the effects or that suppressing the phenomenon will lead to its termination. This, however, makes one oblivious of that which constitutes the causes or driving force behind the phenomenon, and to the real measures that need to be taken to solve the problem. This can only be done after studying a given phenomenon accurately, dealing with its causes according to a fully revised plan, and allocating what might be needed in terms of time, devices, steps and field tests in order to verify its success.

The formation and appearance of any phenomenon require a set of causes, factors and interrelated incentives. For this reason, any attempt at studying a phenomenon, analyzing its factors and causes, and seeking to find appropriate solutions to resolve its different, complex dimensions cannot be achieved through a one-sided study. Rather, a group of cognitive and scientific expertise are required that act as different faculties collaborating to form a comprehensive mindset that is qualified to seek the appropriate solution. Ultimately, restricting oneself to treating the phenomenon by studying its effects and neglecting its causes, or by inspecting it through a single dimension or viewpoint will not suffice, as for every phenomenon there are those who are qualified to deal with it in terms of specialization and experience.

Dealing with the Phenomenon

There are three ways of practically dealing with any phenomenon:

First, a way that tends to explore and to look into the future as well as study the current reality accurately in order to develop plans and cultural, political, economic and social programs that prevent the rise of negative phenomena, thus sparing us conflict and an increase in victims by implementing precautionary plans.

Second, a way that aims to limit negative effects and harmful consequences in the same way that one might act to stop persistent bleeding. This is achieved by analyzing the phenomenon, studying its causes and treating them in order to prevent their recurrence.

Third, a way that does not perceive the compound aspects and causes of the phenomenon and the atmosphere that led to its spread and development because it does not go beyond the stage of detecting its effects. Such a means is limited to treating a phenomenon using financial compensation, suppression, deprivation, punishment or implementing a security solution which only serves to temporarily curb the phenomenon but neither treats it nor protects against its recurrence in the future.

We believe that existing attempts to deal with a given phenomenon alternate between two different (inadequate or inappropriate) approaches or mentalities.

Mentality of Underestimation and Oversimplification

This is characterized by the inability to appreciate a phenomenon's causes, magnitude and effects and neglects to seek the means and expertise that may lead to an understanding of the phenomenon. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> ***{"Rather, they have denied that which they encompass not in knowledge..."}*** [Jonah (Yûnus): 39]

Such a mindset seeks to confront the phenomenon with superficial enthusiasm, mottos, condemnations, colloquiums and tourist conferences,

which all lead merely to wasted years, money and even reward (from Allah, Exalted be He). Although we may excuse those who adopt such a mentality by assuming that they mean well, it is nonetheless difficult in problems of this magnitude to excuse failure by claiming good intentions since it is difficult to describe them as good if they are connected to acts of delusion, a lack of responsibility, suppressing criticism, revision and a proper understanding as well as spreading inadvertence, social unconsciousness and chaos; all of which may actually be prerequisites to implement this mentality.

Mentality of Exaggeration and Incapability

In contradiction to the above approach, some will magnify the phenomenon or its magnitude to a level far greater than it is in reality to the extent that they are overcome by a sense of helplessness and incapacity. This is a result of their own misperception and a lack of a genuine understanding of the extent the different elements of a phenomenon affect it. It is also due to a lack of resources to measure, evaluate and discern between delusion and reality, all of which only lead to inability and a tendency to escape or withdraw by resorting humbly to the aid of 'the other', so declaring one's helplessness. This in turn leads to further aggravation of the given phenomenon as well as a state of continual inability to deal with the phenomenon and the continual dependence on 'the other' for help and protection.

The dilemma may initially appear to reside in the way we actually deal with different phenomena, crises, casualties and states of difficulty and inability, but, in fact, it results from our inability to allocate those qualified to solve such issues in the first place. "Every problem has its inns and outs" or every problem comes with its set of experienced people who are able to solve it. Such people form a set of domains that are equipped to enable us to comprehensively perceive the phenomenon, understand its causes and dangers. They also enable us to ultimately solve the phenomenon, treat it or decrease its effects and lay down a long-term plan to treat the causes in a way that allows each member of this experienced group to participate by stating his opinion and then discussing and consulting with others to arrive at a suitable, productive plan of action.

The reality of our culture, however, is that it is lacking knowledge and violates even the most basic rules of logic that state that "Judging a matter is part of understanding it". Many people still pursue that which they know nothing about. In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all these [one] will be questioned.} [Al-Isrā' (The Night Journey: 36)]

It is as though this verse has been restricted by the masses to aspects of worship or limited to what is said from the pulpits of mosques and places people preach or to the publication, in the most liberal of cases, of more books which are of no benefit to us. Others will simply recite this verse without understanding it, purely for the sake of the ten good deeds which are recorded for the reader with every letter he reads of the Qur'ān, hence rendering themselves vulnerable to the afflictions of previous nations who also read their books without understanding. As such, we continue to live in a state of backwardness that is reflected in the way we perceive the Glorious Book and the *Sunnah*. While there might be some people who know a little, very often they tend to think they know everything.

It is also possible that some casualties, crises and problems are simply individual cases or accidental states that are mere reactions and do not rise to the level of being phenomena. Rather, they are passing conditions that end with the end of their causes. Misinterpreting such problems is a symptom of the mentality of exaggeration to which we have previously referred, and, as the saying goes, it is important not to make, "a mountain out of a molehill." Conversely, the mentality of underestimation because of its oversimplification of matters without first studying its aspects, only leads to the aggravation of what would normally have been trivial matters so that sparks turn into fires.

Alternative Culture

In our view, the path to rid ourselves of the mentality of underestimation and over-simplification and of its counter mentality of exaggeration and feeling of incapability, both of which are characterized by disequilibrium

and disparity with regards to the extent any contributing factor affects the phenomenon, requires the establishment of an alternative culture. Such a culture should be one that believes in the importance and necessity of specialization, has confidence in experience and recognizes that these are the tools for properly understanding different phenomena and for analyzing elements and primary causes as well as the means of studying such phenomena from different dimensions. This will provide a more comprehensive view of existing problems and will enable us to develop solutions that avoid potential crises or that manage such problems when they occur and treat them with the least amount of loss.

Such an alternative culture may require that discussions between different people of different specializations be held in an open environment where the two mentalities, that of underestimation and that of exaggeration, may meet each other and where a mentality of moderation may ultimately be developed. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And everything with Him is by due measure."}

[Ar-Ra'd (Thunder): 8]

In this manner, the developing culture will be that of the nation and not a conception of the elite or isolated ideas of those who belong to a single specialization. This way, affairs may be set straight and states of mental confusion and chaos may be remedied. While such chaos may be considered normal at the onset of a problem, the persistence of such a state without being dealt with by experts would be considered abnormal. Regarding this point, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And when there comes to them something [i.e. information] about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it..."} [An-Nisā' (Women): 83]

It is important that scholars and experts be left to deal with problems as they arise and that the circulation of rumors or false information be curbed so that a situation does not slide from being manageable to being a state of chaos and confusion.

Creating Phenomena

While inspecting different social and human phenomena that surface from time to time in some societies, it is important to state that many of these rising phenomena may seem strange or out of place with regards to a country's geography or to a society's demography, cultural history and religious values. They may be likened to a foreign organ planted into a body that is unable to adjust to it or to a plant placed in foreign soil or an environment that is unsuitable for it. Such phenomena are usually devised as pretexts for achieving hidden agendas for the benefit of "the self" and "the other". This, however, is not uncommon in the history of nations and people. Civilizations have been known to rise and fall due to the many wars that have been fabricated under the pretext of liberation while turning a blind eye to the tremendous number of casualties inflicted. Such wars are usually a means of provoking 'the other' for the purpose of finding political solutions, winning electoral conflicts, defeating foes, instilling sympathetic regimes and settling international and local scores through mass killings.

It is easy to create negative phenomena, crises and wars as well as racial, sectarian and cultural conflicts and to provoke historical differences within backward nations. The people of such nations have become oblivious to such cunning schemes to the extent that they have become bodies without minds. This can be clearly seen when people take ignorant or unqualified people as leaders who teach people what they themselves do not know and issue verdicts without knowledge, thus leading themselves and others astray. In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but (He) takes it away by (causing) the death of the scholars until (no scholars remains); (at that time) people will take ignorant persons as their leaders who, when consulted, will give their verdict without knowledge. So, they will go astray and will lead the people astray."*
>
> [Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on Knowledge]

Hence, jurisprudence and knowledge are not restricted to simply learning the *Shar'ī* text, but rather to understanding it, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Many a bearer of knowledge conveys it to one who is more versed than he is; and many a bearer of knowledge is not versed in it."*(1)

This may explain the reasons behind the wars and conflicts fabricated on Muslim territory at the cultural, political and military levels. Such wars, which cost us land, money and human life, are spread throughout our lands without us being given any right to object whatsoever and regardless of whether or not we think we have a choice in the implementation of such events.

It is not difficult to see that most of the phenomena resulting from the epoch of globalization, and which have afflicted many of our societies with strange social diseases for the purpose of bringing about hegemony, dominance and dependence on foreign experts and solutions, are strange to our society's norms, civilization, historical make-up, religious values and social traditions. Such phenomena are like phantoms, illusions and false fears that are closer to fiction than fact. It is also worth mentioning that such phenomena are fabricated to cause a propaganda campaign in the Muslim countries in order to exhaust their strength and resources and place the population in a state of retardation, weakness and in desperate need of 'the other'.

Whenever scholars and experts or those who have experience and insight are absent and whenever orators and charismatic speakers or those who scream out slogans and are given to inane speech become prominent, matters become confusing, out of control and are either underestimated or overestimated, so becoming smaller or bigger than what they actual are, hence becoming a waste of time and effort. Because of this, societies, especially backward societies, become objects of experiments and areas within which concepts, weapons and consumer markets are tested. Further, they have moved from innovation, production and advancement to importing, unnecessary stockpiling and constant retardation, thereby leading themselves astray. Having said this, perhaps the biggest problem of all is that such societies actually think they are prospering.

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(1) Related by At-Tirmidhī. He deemed it a *Ḥasan* (Approved) *Ḥadīth*.

Another troublesome phenomenon is the emergence of religious and political leaders (the ignorant and unqualified persons elected by people as their leaders because of racial and sectarian reasons) who, while being designated the responsibility of providing solutions, are, in fact, a primary cause of the problem. Whenever such a state becomes manifest within a nation and occupies it, it becomes easy to fabricate pretexts and misleading notions that justify hegemony, occupation, muzzling the opposition, arousing fear and the signing of so-called defense treaties.

In this manner, blatant occupation that saps a nation's resources and raw materials turns into silent occupation that is actually sought and paid for to guard against fears of phantom dangers and imagined phobias and to protect against so-called terrorism and extremism. This, of course, becomes the case when we forget that it is neocolonialism itself that creates these phantom fears and creates the different forms of terrorism, exaggerating its dangers in order to continue to provide pretexts for the existence, hegemony and dominance of the colonial powers. The ensuing confrontation, therefore, becomes one that is between the state and its citizens, producing more damage and increasing the factors that lead to violence and extremism, ultimately causing us to destroy our weapons with our own hands. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...[so] they destroyed their houses by their [own] hands and the hands of the believers. So take warning, O people of vision."} [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 2]

Among the means that help us understand social phenomena and their causes that exist in a nation's subconscious and that should be brought forth so that they may be dealt with appropriately is to believe that the study of any manifestations or social phenomena will fail if it does not take the following into account:

1. The values that constitute a reference for a society and influence a peoples' behavior.
2. All of a society's literary output with regards to the different specializations that exist and that contribute to the building of that particular civilization. In other words, the values and customs that a civilization or culture believes in (its world of ideas).

3. The history of such societies in a general sense without paying attention to any atypical incidences. This is necessary since history embodies phenomena and their practical applications in the real world. History also shows how any phenomenon comes to light and how it transfers from being a theoretical concept to being reality.

Objectivity requires that a complete study of any phenomenon be undertaken. This may be accomplished by understanding the present because it is, in a sense, the future of the past and the fruit of history. It also requires that we identify where, along the historical timeline, the present lies and the relationship of the present to a society's charter of values. This is because phenomena are ultimately a cultural product of the values, references, history, cultural and scientific exchange and the interaction between all of these factors and the different components of reality. It is also necessary that we understand the laws and norms of social movements.

If, after such a study, it is found that any existing phenomenon is strange to the values of a nation and its long history, its society, or even to its culture in a general sense, then such a phenomenon will necessarily be deemed fabricated. Such a foreign phenomenon is one that infects the nation like a disease because of this nation's weakness, dissolution, backwardness and deterioration, which all ultimately enable "the other" to play with that nation's abilities as it pleases, especially in the absence of just scholars who are experienced in guarding truth and uprightness, who remove misinterpretations, exaggerations and distortions and who are able to bring the nation back to its state of purity.

We believe that the course of any nation or culture is inevitably accompanied by different kinds of radicalism and extremism that afflict a nation at certain turning points, states of turbulence and periods of deterioration. Ultimately, however, a culture is judged by its ability to survive crises and to reconcile between itself and "the other". It is also measured by its ability to intercept radicalism, violence, extremism and terrorism, and to pluck out corruption at its roots, as well as its ability to renew and reform itself, especially when its norms and values become fixed and are looked upon as being infallible or when man, who is the object of these phenomena, is not involved in their formation.

Ultimately, violence, exaggeration and terrorism are cultural and behavioral phenomena that reside deep inside us and stem from that which we have seen and learned and from that which form our memory and imagination. It may be said that culture is that which resides in our subconscious in terms of motives, stimulators of behavior and ways of dealing with situations after forgetting what we had learned.

Conflict in the Western Culture

The Philosophy of Conflict

It will be beneficial for us to take a glance at the course of Western civilization, which represents "the other", and provide some intellectual and behavioral examples of the Western cultural heritage. This will help the reader and researcher interpret many of its activities, its formative factors and the cultural make-up upon which it operates and through which it deals with others, since culture is the real compass that determines the destination of any civilization and fuels its course of action.

By presenting examples of violence, conflict and confrontation that mark the character of Western culture and continue to accompany its progress in different fields to this day, it is not our intention to raise disputes and substitute discussion for quarrels or to accede, ultimately, to the wishes of "the other" by falling into such negative pursuits. Such a presentation is merely an attempt to facilitate an interpretation and understanding and also to estimate and deduce conclusions as this may well be the route to understand and protect our culture.

A study of the causes and contexts that explain the Western civilization's ability to renew itself, survive crises, fabricate justifications and wage wars under different pretexts, as well as its ability to stimulate progress, innovation and production, and our contrasting failure to survive crises lies elsewhere.

The blatant truth is that the course of Western civilization or, more precisely, Western culture with its religious sects: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant etc; and political groups: feudalism, socialism, capitalism etc (there

are countless examples of such sects some of which we will mention as we continue), is based on conflict. This means that the concept of life in the Western culture is conflict and that its cultural progress requires the existence of an enemy that stirs it to take action, guarantees integration and prevents interior clashes. If there is no enemy to perform such a role, then an illusive enemy is created.

Perhaps what is more dangerous is that the religious creed in Western culture is also not free of the notion of conflict. Such a notion itself is derived from Greek and Roman ideologies and their ideas of presumed conflicts that occurred between man and the gods, even to the point where it was declared that, **"God is dead"**. Such a declaration was adopted by the prominent philosopher Nietzsche and, in the stage of post-modernism, they believed in the absolute death of God and that man was purely material (i.e., without spirituality).

The nature of this culture which is based on conflict (conflict essentially being based on terminating and annihilating "the other") stems from a religious notion, as we mentioned earlier, in order to control man's culture and the philosophy of the universe, man and life. Because of this, we find that cultural movements, human behaviors and daily interactions of different aspects of life are infused with this tendency to be in conflict. This phenomenon is also clear in the conflict between gods throughout pagan history, such as the conflict between the gods of light and darkness, the gods of fertility and sterility, good and evil and so on. Even the notion of **"God is dead"** is pagan in origin as the Greeks believed in the deaths of some gods. Further, the creed of self-sacrifice of gods also exists in old pagan creeds, as mentioned by Sir Arthur Findlay in his book *The Rock of Truth*.

This conflict between man and gods is part of what has led the Western mentality to the notion of denying the existence of God and claiming that life is purely material. It has also led to the separation between religious affairs and affairs of life as well as to man evading his responsibility to his Creator since societies have become engrossed with notions of conflict between man and nature, conflicts between classes and races, conflicts

between religion and science, preachers and politicians, man and woman, Marxism and capitalism as well as conflicts between different ethnic groups, cultures and nations as a whole. Other examples of such conflicts is the notion of the clash of civilizations proposed by Samuel Huntington and Fukuyama's idea that human history would one day end with the victory of capitalism over its adversaries.

It is natural for such a civilization to bear extremism in its womb since it believes that rebellion, violence and extremism are the solution. Examples of movements or ideologies that were based on this include all the racist approaches such as fascism, Nazism, anti-Semitism, Stalinism and right wing radicalism, all of which believe that hegemony, domination and power is the only proper code of conduct and the only path to supremacy. Such movements believed in "survival of the fittest" which suggested that life was only for the strong.

In his famous saying, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) claimed that, "Man is a wolf to man and all is in war against all." The European mindset continues to hold superstitions and mythical images of such characters as "Peter the Hermit", "Knights of the Temple", as well as other legends of heroism, not to mention images of the rivers of blood spilled by the Crusaders that waged their hostilities for two centuries or close to ten generations. Such is the example of the circumstances and the environment within which people have been raised and within which a culture has been shaped using education, the media, history, literature and folklore.

Such notions, however, did not remain confined to the realm of the abstract or the mythical, rather they developed to become religious creeds that moved many a soldier to participate in the crusades and kill others as an alleged act of worship bringing them closer to God. Today, pretexts for more conquests continue to be proposed, stimulating new movements and conquests and making new enemies so justifying intervention, the production of military equipment on a massive scale and military campaigns causing maximum violence.

The notion of conflict, whether with God, nature, life, civilizations or cultures, and which is based on the belief that survival is only for the fittest, strongest or most powerful, or those who have weapons of mass destruction, is a cultural order that requires for its survival the continual circulation of worries, fears and tensions as well as the creation of enemies and confrontations. Indeed, this has become the so-called means of defending oneself against "the other", either at a civil level or in terms of regional and world wars, as well as the reason to produce everything from handheld weapons to those of mass destruction.

Conflict in Practice

After having cast some light on the world of thought by discussing its philosophies and radical organizations such as Nazism, Fascism, Anti-Semitism and other right wing organizations, it might be beneficial to throw some light on some devastating historical events that are considered predecessors to these notions or references and intellectual backgrounds for such cultural approaches.

One such example is the Crusades. The Crusades, instigated by clergymen and kings who claimed to be protecting religion and representing God's will on Earth, began to be directed towards the Muslim world and had devastating results that were the consequences of two centuries of aggression. They caused religious spite and hatred that still have an effect on the Western intellect today.

It is probably enough to mention that the number of those killed in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Mosque exceeded ninety thousand people and was to the extent that the courtyard was flooded with blood. It is important to note that such bloodshed took place using the comparatively limited weaponry of that age. The spirit of the Crusades continues to affect the Western mentality and even stimulates it more. This spirit and culture continued to accompany Western thought in the wars of new conquests and is very manifest in the words of General Goro who entered Damascus, stood on the grave of Saladin Al-Ayyûbî and said "I am one of the grandsons of the Crusaders. Where are your grandsons, Saladin?"

This spirit is also manifest in various slip-of-the-tongue incidents, which were quickly corrected, describing present-day conflicts as an extension of the crusades or even as crusades in themselves. These occurred at the highest political or intellectual levels as well as the highest religious levels. Indeed, even art and the media have been leveraged to express such hatred (the recent cartoons in the Danish papers is such an example). Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 118]

Because conflict, according to the West, is the concept of life itself, it will continue until the end of time, ending only with the victory and domination of the values of the Western cultural in a manner far removed from the concepts of co-existence, cooperation and partnership. Even if their use of power fails to achieve any goals, such failure will be ascribed to an insufficient use of power, and so conflict will continue until 'the other' is cancelled completely or until 'the other' believes in the Western values and yields to Western dominance. In this context, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...Never will the Jews nor the Christians be pleased with you until you follow their religion..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 120]

Conflict as a Cultural Fuel

While conflict and wars are considered the fuel of the culture under discussion, such conflicts are not restricted to fighting those with a different religion or culture; rather, the idea of conflict has often been extended to include even those who share the same culture and religion.

The general public still recall images of the Spanish-American war of 1898. This war paved the way for the Anglo-American alliance in the twentieth century via two world wars. It is also considered a turning point in modern history because it witnessed the rise of the United States of America as an international power with a tendency to spread its imperialistic desires throughout the world. Other notable wars and conflicts include:

- The American Civil War (1775-1783).
- The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). During this war, about 70,000 people died in combat, about 30,000 were executed, and 15,000 were killed in air raids.
- The American Civil War (1861-1865). The number of victims in this civil war was about 600,000 men.
- The Russian Civil War (1918-1922).
- The Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905).
- The First World War (1914-1918). About 65,000,000 soldiers were mobilized for this war and 8,000,000 soldiers were killed. This war cost 281,887 million dollars.
- The Second World War (1939-1945). In this war, weapons of mass destruction were used and nuclear bombs were dropped onto two Japanese towns, Nagasaki and Hiroshima. This was when the world witnessed the first victims of nuclear weaponry, an atrocity that, to this day, has victims lying on hospital beds. The number of victims in Hiroshima is estimated at 78,150 deaths, 37,425 injured and 13,000 missing, in addition to the number of deaths resulting from the subsequent radiation.
- The American-Vietnamese war and the recent occupation of Iraq are two further examples of incidents that cost countless lives.

A new French historical study revealed that the authorities of the French occupation, that occupied Algeria for more than one hundred and thirty years, used 42,000 Algerians as laboratory rats when they exploded their first nuclear bomb in the Algerian desert on 13/10/1960. The study asserted that France performed two experiments in the town called Al-Hamûdiyyah and Ain-Afli Mountain. The findings of the study threw new light on the violent practices, coercion, oppression and savagery of neocolonialism that many see as an extension of the Crusades and their culture and the notion of conflict which is considered the driving force behind European civilization and its heir, the American culture. This, of course, lies in sharp contrast to the alleged slogans of modernization or the proclaimed wish to spread the values of democracy, human rights, self-determination, religious liberty, etc.

The notions, beliefs and practices that we have just reviewed are not intended to undermine the Western culture or its noteworthy role in exploration, creation, human innovation and what it has allowed, especially in its own countries, in terms of the freedom and human rights that its citizens and inhabitants enjoy.

Rather, our aim was to provide some samples to help study the topic at hand correctly in order to deduce the real reasons and motives behind these wars and conflicts and what they conceal in terms of the continuous aggression against the Islamic world. Such aggression has become a course of life for these cultures.

It might be said that such aggression has reached the point that the aggressors have become colorblind, i.e. they have lost their ability to discern properly, and their judgments have become too general and are nearer to being random than logical, causing all Muslims to be viewed as terrorists and attributing the bad deeds of the few to the majority, regardless of the Muslims' condemnation of these deeds.

Further, it has created cultural problems and difficulties, whose basis are illogical and lack common sense, by alleging such notions as Islamic fascism and by considering Islam as a source of terrorism, accusing Allah's honest Messenger as a man sent to spread terrorism and evil.

It is therefore clear that the war that is alleged to be waged against terrorism is, in fact, one that is being waged against Islam and against any idea, method, culture, group, activity or call that has any relationship with Islam. All such practices are carried out under the pretext of plucking out the roots of violence and terrorism. If this was truly the case, generalization would not be a key feature of their views, but rather the key feature would be to establish a specific, moderate alternative.

In reality, it is Islam that is sought to be plucked out at the roots and not terrorism, and it is Islam that is being fought in the same way it was fought during the Crusades, but this time without raising the cross so as not to provoke or incite any sentiment in a way that may cause them more difficulty.

The Causes and Stimulators of Violence

A Compound Phenomenon

We assert that violence and terrorism are two human phenomena that are not specific to any religion, race, color, nature or geography, regardless of the philosophies developed to justify them. These cultural phenomena are complex or compound and are the results of many factors that contribute to their rise and establishment as cultural concepts that motivate aggressive behavior against "the other" due to either apparent or concealed interests. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Say, "Each works according to his manner"..."}

[Al-Isrā' (The Night Journey): 84]

Individuals, countries and nations may, under specific circumstances, experience such cultural phenomena, and so, as mentioned previously it is important to explore the root causes of such phenomena rather than confine ourselves to studying their effects, since as long as the causes exist, the problem will exist. This, of course, does not mean that we have to stop dealing with the effects; indeed this is not even an option. To deal with the effects is much like giving first aid to a patient, sooner or later, however, it becomes necessary for that patient to see a doctor for a diagnosis of the illness and for an accurate remedy to be prescribed to treat the illness, prevent its recurrence or perhaps rid the patient of a particular addiction or habit.

The security solution for the phenomenon of violence, while not being a solution per se, may be considered a temporary remedy that helps stop the effects of violence causing further aggravation. Disproportionate reactions in dealing with violence as well as our unawareness of practical limits and human rights, however, will only serve to create another problem or aggravate the existing one, rather than act as a solution.

The problem lies in the fact that violence is a complex phenomenon that cannot be ascribed to one cause since it stems from different political, economic, social, *Shar'ī* and educational factors. But the act of stigmatizing Islam and the Islamic world while sparing other creeds, religions and

societies the allegations of extremism and terrorism can be attributed to "ideological" motives in addition to economic and political motives that are all far from objective in nature. To ignore the real reasons of terrorism is a way of concealing the real criminal or the real stimulator. This is perhaps why we consider restricting ourselves to treating only the effects as a negative contribution that leads to the crime continuing to be concealed as well as the continual spread of violence.

Through such an understanding, it becomes possible to explain the reason behind the circulation of intellectual terrorism and the deceiving allegations against those who try to find the reasons behind terrorism as justifying or even instigating terrorism itself. Clearly, the pretext of terrorism is one that is used to justify wars, interference, oppression, hegemony and aggression against a nation's culture, creed and courses of action.

We firmly believe that the remedy for the phenomena of violence, extremism and terrorism that has begun to take on an international form, as well as steps to prevent them, requires that these phenomena be the subject of an objective and deliberate study by those experienced in all branches of social and human sciences, especially Shar`ī studies. This is not least because these phenomena are complex and complicated and cannot be solved using quickly improvised solutions and suggestions that in themselves do not lie far from the current security solution. While the security solution uses violence as a remedy, proponents or blind enthusiasts do little more than attempt to treat such problems with raised voices, the incitement of uproars and mere words of condemnation.

Because currently proposed or implemented solutions are restricted to dealing with the effects, the phenomena of violence, extremism and terrorism continue to occur and persist in a manner that is clear and apparent to anyone.

The security solution dedicated to treat the phenomenon of violence in Muslim countries is packed with aggression against Islam. Worse than this, such a 'solution' is fueled with Muslim weapons, aid and money, which leads to the continual aggravation and spread of violence. Dealing with vio-

lence using violence may be deemed as one of the main causes of increased violence and bloody conflicts, and this is substantiated by the current situation in some, if not all, Muslim countries, differing only in its scale and magnitude from one country to another. It is therefore very obvious that Islam is the target, regardless of what may be presented in terms of remedies and so-called security solutions since, after the fall of Marxism, Islam is clearly the enemy that has been chosen.

In the view of the perpetrators of violence, Islam or the Muslim countries are never free of violence, extremism, radicalism and sectarian and racial conflicts, since they are the pretexts used by such perpetrators for the accomplishment of their motives.

Violence, or the phenomenon of violence, is a complex phenomenon that is a result of both internal and external reasons. Such reasons collaborate to constitute the soil upon which violence, extremism, terrorism and radicalism may grow.

Causes and Stimulators

Violence also comes with a set of general or common causes that accompany it at all times, as well as other causes that are more specific to a given country, nation, creed and culture.

Irritation and Defiance

In our view, perhaps the most important reasons for the phenomenon in Muslim countries, which have become the only countries that constitute an arena for violence and occupation, are occupation itself, the exploitation of resources and raw materials, hegemony, suppression and despotism, cultural and religious provocation, attempts to eliminate the national identity and to instill foreign customs and habits as well as to bring about widespread disdain for the nation's existing customs, creed and religious symbols. All such provocations ultimately act to stimulate the nation to muster the power to defend itself and to resist occupation for the sake of all forms of independence. While such resistance may take on a violent form, it is nonetheless justified in instances of self-defense.

The Islamic world continues to be the subject of aggression and occupation, whether these acts take on a modern or conventional form. For this reason, conflict, actions to defend, resistance and movements to liberate continue to exist in the Islamic world. Such occupation began with the military, economic, cultural and political occupation associated with the Crusades, continued in the form of neocolonialism, from which virtually no country was spared, culminating ultimately to the establishment of Israel, which represents the expanding and ongoing base of colonial occupation. Today, an even more modern form of neocolonialism has taken shape, namely, "the epoch of globalization" within which political, cultural, media, economic and commercial hegemony belong to the world's powers and that requires all other countries to be sources of raw materials, energy, consumer markets as well as their labor and talents be manipulated for the laboratories, study centers and factories of the dominating civilization.

As an expanding, colonialist base, Israel is still the center of violence, tension, extremism and regional terrorism. Israel, however, is a special kind of colonialism that is based on religious beliefs and hence can easily provoke and result in reactions of defiance. Further, Israeli land occupation seeks to take over other people's lands, expelling the natives from it. This also, in itself, is considered religious, cultural, national, economic and political provocation.

Historically, resistance has taken on different forms, especially after the failure of regimes that were established for the alleged purpose of liberation. Such regimes persecuted and expelled opponents, ruined economies, silenced voices and imposed constant states of emergency all for the alleged sake of liberation and freedom. All of these actions served to do nothing more than throw the existing situation into further chaos and confusion. Indeed, when new liberation movements began to develop, they clashed with the existing regimes that had failed to accomplish any kind of liberation and which, in fact, had turned into shields that served to protect Israel by declaring the new resistance movements as enemies, and by proceeding to crack down on them. Hence there ensued conflicts between people and governments, the Islamic nation and individual coun-

tries, security and civil institutions, the oppressed and the oppressors, the brain and the body, and between understanding and brute power. Such is the current state of the Islamic world which continues to be filled with violence and turbulence and where many of those in charge continue to allow the nation's powers and abilities to be broken and destroyed by the hands of their own sons. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"...[so] they destroyed their houses by their [own] hands and the hands of the believers. So take warning, O people of vision."}* [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 2]

Globalizing the Phenomenon of Terrorism

Perhaps more dangerous today are the attempts to globalize terrorism for the purpose of waging a new world war and to fabricate new reasons for continuing to use terror and for justifying intervention and reoccupation of the world, especially the Islamic world, with the aid of new slogans and pretexts. For this reason, resistance and *Jihâd* continue and Islam continues to be the shield that protects the nation from dissolution and the so-called liberation movements.

In the past, many rebellions and resistance movements sought protection under the umbrella of Islam and took Islam to be their foundation and the shield that protected the nation from dissolution, Islam has also always been the force that drives towards liberation and is a source of life for the nation, guaranteeing its continued existence and offering it the endurance and the power for confrontation and defense. It also provides its citizens with the legitimacy and incentive for martyrdom.

Jihâd was the essential factor that prevented the colonial powers from settling in the Arab world. Because the enemies of Islam understand this, distorting the concept of *Jihâd* was the first thing adopted by the colonial powers in an attempt to suppress and mutilate the nation's culture, stifle its effectiveness, isolate and control it, and find a fifth column of intellectuals who were involved in the cultural manipulation of Muslim countries and constitute an active market for political manipulation.

For colonization to take place, the presence of scholars advocating occupation is necessary because they prepare the required *Fatwâs* (Legal Opinions) to facilitate occupation. Hence, they are deceptive and declare that the foreign phenomena which are necessary for colonization are acceptable. Such individuals also resort to distorted interpretations and erroneous explanations of Islamic values in order to help justify and legitimize the actions of the enemy...and it is as though they have forgotten that this religion (Islam) is pure and faultless.

The history of occupation in its different forms, starting with mandates and imposed supervision which view the Islamic world as being weak and in need of custodians to manage its affairs, and then to colonist occupation, has been the main reason for the backwardness and turbulence of the Islamic world and has led to it being divided into groups, creeds and sects that are fueled by colonialists and have become similar to time bombs that are liable to explode at any time depending on the inclination of those who hold the fuse.

Without doubt, violence and extremism as well as sectarian, doctrinal, racial and fanatical conflicts have been created and spread by colonial elements to the extent that even the understanding of *Jihâd*, resistance and the will to sacrifice has been manipulated by these colonial powers so that Muslim blood continues to be shed and Muslim countries are manipulated even more in a way that suits the colonial powers' interests. The moment these aims and interests are met, those who had been manipulated for the purpose of achieving these goals quickly move from being called fighters or those struggling for a good cause to being called terrorists or radicals.

Added to this are the current cultural, political, media and economic efforts that are continually being exerted to mutilate the concept of *Jihâd* by associating it with extremism, terrorism and violence and by terrifying people of the idea of even discussing the notion.

Efforts to eliminate *Jihâd* are not restricted to hunting down Muslim *mujâhidûn* (fighters carrying out *Jihâd*), offering rewards for capturing them or even to stigmatizing them and their actions and deeds or raising doubts

about their intentions (to this extent, the enemies of Islam have gone a long way in penetrating Muslim defenses, distorting images and practicing illegal actions to justify their attacks). Rather, under the continuing pretexts of fighting terrorism and in an alleged effort to nip terrorism at the roots, the enemy has interfered in educational curricula, the media and charitable institutions. Moreover, attempts have been made to eliminate the verses of the Qur'ân as well as the relevant *Hadîths*, research and studies concerning *Jihâd* and anything related to it at the educational, media and cultural level. Charitable institutions and those who manage them have also been targeted and accused of aiding terrorism, and then hunted down on this basis.

Indeed, Islam as a whole and its Prophet (PBUH) have been singled out as the main sources of terrorism and extremism. Occasional political slips of the tongue, as mentioned before, provide solid verbal evidence for this in addition to the actions that we see everyday. In this context, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...Hatred has already appeared from their mouths..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 118]

If terrorism and violence were indeed the real targets and their intentions are bona fide, those claiming to fight terrorism would encourage moderation, assert human values and show tolerance and coexistence with the Islamic civilization. If their intentions were genuine, they would seek to establish and entrench Islamic values because it is these values which are capable of subjugating, marginalizing and eliminating terrorism altogether. Such instigators would also make room for just scholars who would be entrusted to clarify the correct religious values and remove misinterpreted, distorted and exaggerated views. In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretations of the ignorant, deceptions of the falsifiers and distortions of the extremists."

[Related by Al-Bayhaqî]

Today, Islam is the target, and because it has become the alternative enemy, the conflicts, battles and struggles that have occurred throughout history by Islamic liberation movements, regardless of whether or not they succeeded, have become the means to defend this religion. It may be said that occupation itself is the main reason, or instigating factor, behind the establishment of these liberation movements.

Targeting Islamic Awareness

In discussing the phenomenon of violence and in inspecting its reasons and roots, it is important to emphasize that Islam still constitutes the main reason why occupation is resisted and that most sacrifices made to achieve this end have been Islamic sacrifices. Liberation movements in the occupied Muslim countries were originally Islamic movements whose achievements were falsely attributed to postcolonial regimes; this, however, does not change the true facts. Historically, Islam has also acted to prevent the Islamic nation's values from being dissolved or diluted by cultural occupation and hegemony.

Further, all forms of resistance, conflicts and contemporary struggles, which are apparent in the Palestinian resistance to colonist occupation (regardless of the names these resistance movements are given: rebellions, *fedayee* (patriotic and military) operations, resistance movements or *Intifadas*) were shaped, stimulated, fueled and provided with the stamina to continue by Islam. The extremely provocative and defiant establishment of Israel was the driving force behind what is today called the Islamic uprising or the Islamic awareness movement with its tendency for military and *Jihâd*-related campaigns. These movements began to be labeled as extremist or radical and eventually as terrorist movements, to the extent that these accusations were eventually used to stigmatize those who had any relation to Islam or invited others to it in any way, regardless of the methods used in doing so.

Enemies of Islam were not oblivious to this fact as Islam itself has always constituted their real problem. This is because they realize that Islam is the nation's culture, civilization and history, in addition to it being the stimula-

tor of resistance and *Jihâd*. For this reason, it was necessary to label Islamic awareness movements as well as their political and *Jihâdî* (i.e. military) counterpart organizations and financial, charitable and relief institutions at all levels as being extremist. At the forefront of such campaigns are the continuing attempts to penetrate, provoke and embarrass these movements with false accusations in an effort to lead them to practices that may reflect negatively upon themselves, so resulting in them being attributed even more to violence, terrorism and extremism.

One of the grave problems today is that the enemies of Islam have, to a great extent, managed to scare and persuade some political decision makers into believing that Islamic institutions and policies pose a threat to them and their regimes, and that they are in fact time bombs set to explode at any time. These enemies use all available means to fabricate examples for the purpose of achieving their aims, and to try and prove that an open door policy is the only way to protect against radicalism and terrorism (the open door policy in reality being the rebellion against Islamic values, provocation and cultural hegemony). Instilling this belief has led political decision makers to take measures to surround themselves, their palaces and their thrones with those who either fight or show animosity to Islam, hence resulting in violence and the further aggravation of matters.

It was at this point that violent forms of confrontation and extremism started to appear and conflicts between governments and their people started to become more apparent. The startling results of these conflicts are that both the killer and the killed are Muslims.

The Combination of False Beliefs and Injustice

The stage of post-colonialism (it is important not to mislabel it as the stage of independence and liberation) was even more dangerous for the development of the (Islamic) nation than the age of colonization because it was, in fact, an extension of the occupation itself and the leaders of the post-colonial nations were in a sense chosen by the occupying forces so that they would continue their legacy and accomplish a mission that was already underway. This strategy necessitated the termination of resistance and

liberation movements, which had struggled in the cause of Islam and were then denied the fruits of their efforts and sacrifices, and the establishment of alternative, sponsored agent regimes advocating occupation. Such regimes could not possibly continue to rule or maintain their authority over their peoples without using terrorism, suppression, state-of-emergency laws and political despotism as well as violence, expulsion and persecution.

Occupation has left, in Muslim countries, systems that might be regarded as security institutions or stations that work for the benefit of the nations that used to occupy them, while making sure that these institutions receive everything they need for the continued use of force, terrorism, and violence in confronting, suppressing and defeating enemies in every and any possible way. This then led to continual social backwardness in practically all aspects of society and the lack of advancement in everything except the development of new means of oppression, terrorism and political despotism. This, all the time, served to aggravate inequality and diminish values of equal opportunity and general participation.

Other consequences included political congestion, the violation of dignity, the persecution of the learned and the experienced and the entrustment of responsibilities to those deemed as loyal no matter how uninformed or inexperienced they were, continuously leading the population to a state of despair, depression and continual provocation. Violence was, therefore, a very natural result as popular sentiment was that the ruling class was no more qualified to rule than those being ruled and that their authority was based on suppression and force, rather than wisdom and knowledge.

The resulting atmosphere was one marked by an absence of citizenship (or the sense of belonging to a country or nation) and citizen's rights as well as a loss of dignity, all of which served to turn citizens into subjugated, oppressed, desperate and worthless creatures and caused them to lose the spirit of resistance and the will to defend their rights.

Citizens reached a stage where they started to ask themselves, "What is there to defend if I have nothing for the enemy to take? Anything I have, I am not worried about losing it and it's possible that the enemy is sometimes more merciful (than the ruling regime) anyway!"

It may further be said that freedom, democracy, open criticism and revision has granted Israel power and guaranteed the continuation of its ability to correct its mistakes, while despotism and suppression, on the other hand, have paved the way for the defeat, gradual deterioration and retardation of Arab countries.

The monopolization of wealth and the exploitation of human effort have served to turn society into a mass of spite, where the paradox of those who work hard but live poorly and those who do not work at all but live lavishly constitutes a time bomb set to explode at any time. These are further causes for violence, extremism, terrorism and the urge for revenge that may at times be socially justifiable if not altogether valid.

Social injustice is, no doubt, a primary source of terrorism and extremism, and the general public still recall many images of violence, terrorism and the countless victims that resulted from the manipulation of class discrimination by the communist revolution. Rebellions and revolutions led by the destitute and the oppressed will continue to exist as long as their causes continue to exist.

Political Injustice

An investigation of the history of the last half century in the Islamic world reveals that this period was, more or less, a period of preparation for many societies to join the new age. It was a time that allowed societies to derive benefit from their experiences, construct institutions, develop their people, develop their educational systems and benefit from the real open door policy and from the information revolution as well as to become stable. An investigation of the same period of time in Israel, on the other hand, reveals the large scale violence this state was built upon as well as the utilization of the state as a colonial base. We also find that the declaration of Israel in the Arab world caused uprisings, conflicts, large scale military expenditure, the suppression of liberties, false allegations, accusations of treason, frequent condemnations, the creation of false leaderships and the circulation of intellectual terrorism, political despotism and social injustice. It is also a period marked by the seizure of liberties, disregard for hu-

man rights and the eradication of equal opportunities, all under the pretext of preparing for battle and liberation.

Additionally, voices were silenced, minds crippled and students, laborers and farmers recruited by the military, all of which only served to exacerbate the backward image that had been established by the so-called security institutions. Such institutions were themselves managed by the unemployed, the academically unsuccessful and spiteful individuals who sought to seek authority over others as a means of settling a score or ridding themselves of an inferiority complex that had led them to want to take revenge and inflict harm on others.

Such individuals became a burden to the entire system, increasing its difficulties, its isolation, its inability to function and perhaps even its collective sense of hatred. It is important to note that the positions held by such individuals are filled in the societies of 'the other' by highly educated, highly intelligent and perceptive people with balanced personalities who are qualified to handle the tasks they are entrusted with.

Because sabotaging public and domestic organized institutions and infiltrating them is still a constant obsession and something Israel sees as necessary for its stability, because Islam and *Jihâd* were the driving force behind most confrontations, and because mutilating the concept of *Jihâd* and infiltrating effective charitable organizations is the only way that guarantees the colonist base's (Israel) future, we can see why Islam is antagonized so emphatically and why *Jihâd* and *Mujâhidûn* are being persecuted. We are also able to see why relief institutions are being besieged and falsely accused, although they are innocent and have nothing to do with such false charges.

Indeed, it was colonialism and the military regimes that came about in the stage following occupation as well as what they perpetrated in terms of political despotism, social injustice and other violations to continue their existence, that were the reasons behind nearly all the accusations that *Jihâd* has been stigmatized with, such as violence, terrorism etc, even if *Jihâd* has not been openly and directly accused of such acts.

Within this corrupt atmosphere of political despotism, social injustice, illicit gain, deepening grudges, social discord, lack of legal legitimacy, the absence of interest or concern for collective affairs and the explosion of sectarian and racial conflicts, the use of violence in its different forms was seen as necessary for different reasons; and as the instigators sought historical or value-based legitimacy they took refuge in Islam. Islam then became the caravan that carried everything that was or was not worthwhile or that was or was not legitimate.

Under the auspices of the regimes that developed in the era following occupation, and that practiced such severe oppression that the populace preferred occupation since it at least afforded some security, safety and respect in terms of human rights, people found that the cost of independence was being paid with their blood, food, security and freedom.

Perhaps the main crime these post-colonial regimes were guilty of was the seizure, with the aid of the occupation powers, of the achievements of the liberation movements that had been motivated and protected by Islam. Further, the blood, goals and values of martyrs were forgotten and their sacrifices denied along with the values and cultural history of the nation. These regimes also set about antagonizing the social and cultural structure of the nation and its cultural history.

Indeed, even when not in uniform, most post-colonial military leaders would not give up the practice of oppression or suppression, leading to outbursts of conflicts that were perhaps more violent and more extreme than they had ever been before. Because such conflicts were intermingled with depression, disillusionment and regression and because oppression from members of the same 'family' is more difficult to swallow, the ensuing conflicts and struggles were worse than those of the occupation period. This, as mentioned previously, was the stage when we began to destroy our weapons using our own hands for the sake and interests of 'the other'.

Strangely, and in spite of their allegiance with the occupying forces, political and cultural traitors were oblivious to the fact that they were ultimately regarded as worthless individuals who were being used for a particular task or mission and would then be disposed of upon completion of that mission.

It is only natural that within such an atmosphere of successive crises and violent, terrifying and extremist confrontations, within which violations are committed for the purpose of defeating foes, the phenomenon of "the culture of confrontation" should develop. Such a culture is one that promotes the values of sacrifice and martyrdom while at the same time labels the enemy with a variety of different attributes that include infidelity, hypocrisy and oppression for the purpose of inciting people to confront and combat this chosen political enemy. Such a culture will consequently transgress rights, take the lives of women and children and unlawfully seize property under the pretext of destroying anything which aids the enemy.

The practices of the regimes of oppression and terror are no worse than similar practices carried out by certain organizations and individuals. Such practices have even aimed to frighten and intimidate women, old men and children and have employed the most brutal practices as a means of pressuring and draining energy, far from any concept of responsibility. The result is that fighting and conflict developed between the sons of the same nation, and violence and extremism become the only method of interaction between the (Islamic) nation and individual countries, and between peoples and governments, thus taking us back to the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance with its zealous arrogance and its explosive and destructive character.

False Claims of Officials

Such a problematic atmosphere is one caused by the crisis culture, which brushes aside just and able scholars who guide people and set them on the path of moderation while leading them away from extremism, radicalism, misinterpretations and the kind of deceptions used by the crisis culture. Appropriate *Shar'î* (relating to *Sharî'ah*) jurisprudence is also absent in such a problematic atmosphere and as a result *Shar'î* rulings are abused by applying them out of context in order to justify extremist practices and give them *Shar'î* legitimacy.

Within such a problematic atmosphere, the influence of religious institutions, especially official ones, is greatly diminished, since their only function is to justify the acts of oppressive regimes and provide them with juridical

legitimacy under the threat of punishment should they fail to carry out this task. The inability of religious institutions to condemn state policy is proof that oppressive regimes have succeeded in turning religious institutions into political ones. Such institutions have hence failed to carry out their tasks, lost the confidence and respect of the people and have become unable to perform their role to the extent that correct verdicts have disappeared altogether, while the appearance of verdicts based on ignorance and that may lead to increased violence and extremism have started to become more prominent.

Also dangerous is the rise of religious leaders who create crises by using public support. Such leaders base their actual foothold of their leadership on the crisis and try to seize the authority of the state by using the public or by leveraging public opinion.

The danger of such leaderships are such that they may actually issue dangerous verdicts in order to appease the public and guarantee their own continued existence, even if these verdicts lead, ultimately, to the destruction of the nation. Because the religious leader, in a sense, represents the nation and its destiny, he may be likened to the leading party, or the sole leader, or the hero of a nation, etc... While the religious leader and the leading party may have different labels, they, nonetheless, share the same practices. The developing situation is a complicated state of affairs as it is all about falsehood confronting falsehood, so that the nation ultimately finds itself between a rock and a boulder.

The Problematic Mentality

Perhaps even more dangerous than this is what resulted from the violence and the conflicts of cold-blooded 'Commanders of the Faithful' who attacked the rulings of the *Sharī'ah* without having any knowledge or *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and monopolized authority without being qualified to take on the necessary responsibilities or take on Imamate as a whole. They, therefore, allowed themselves the right to wage war; unlawfully take lives, properties and honor and accuse entire societies of infidelity, backwardness and apostasy. This then led to justifying the damage of public

property and the killing of women and children under the pretext that the enemy was living with them. This was the beginning of the manipulation of rulings and their misapplication.

This crisis mentality and atmosphere of conflict led to the emergence of scholars who have no knowledge or any relationship to *Fiqh* and *Sharî'ah*. Some were students, others were laborers and craftsmen... and so on. In fact, their only relationship to Islam was in their affiliation to an Islamic organization which required little more than a specific uniform and outward appearance.

It also led to the rise of group leaders who practiced violence, committed murder and treachery and accused anyone conflicting with them of hypocrisy. Furthermore, Islamic slogans have been used by those who have no *Fiqhî* (relating to *Fiqh*) and religious knowledge and who may be recruited by "the other", to incite the nation and to create a mutilated image of Islam that weakens Islamic values and diminishes any confidence in them.

Allowing the misapplication and abuse of Islamic values by the ignorant and by conspirators who have no *Fiqhî* knowledge and who try to manipulate these values and *Shar'î* rulings for the sake of legitimizing oppressive authorities, are ways of fighting these values and harming them by the hands of their own advocates in a way that is more destructive than anything the enemy is capable of doing. In their attempt to penetrate Islamic values and nations, enemies participate in creating this distorted image as it constitutes the most incisive weapon in fighting the values which are considered the basis of the nation's civilization, hope and salvation. This is much like weakening a body by striking or harming one of its essential organs.

Our inability to condemn these *Ijtihâds* (*Shar'î* opinions), conflicts and forms of violence, for one reason or another, under the pretext that this condemnation may itself be in favor of the enemies of our religion and country, and that it may lead to dissociation, has cost us lives and property, and only leads to the further lack of confidence in Islamic values and accusations of bias even by those who sympathize with them.

In a sense, it may be said that the enemy has managed to achieve his goals, and that this mutilated image of distorted religious values held or practiced by ignorant Muslims and scholars, who are used to advocate tyranny, are extremely dangerous to Islam and Muslims since these are practices that neither religion nor common sense can accept. The advocacy and adoption of such distorted values undertaken by street leaders and demagogues is definitely an aggravating factor.

The sense of being religiously or culturally deceived tends to be aggravated and goes from bad to worse when those who once appeared to be religious are revealed to be hypocrites, advocating social despotism and justifying its actions. It is at this point that false beliefs combine with political injustice. On the other hand, some of those responsible for issuing legal verdicts have started to advocate groups characterized by extremist ideologies, terrorism and those with a tendency to engage in conflict, whether they are right or wrong. In this case, false beliefs combine again with public injustice, and falsehood continues to fight falsehood. The crisis culture is something that has started to dominate a society's primary culture, resulting in its dissolution and its degeneration, which ultimately leads to dependence on "the other" for the establishment of peace and security. Through this cycle or process, the colonist is actually called upon to maintain security, and occupation becomes not only legitimate, but paid for...and to Allah returns all affairs.

The Civilization of the Last Prophethood... Mercy to the Worlds

After having discussed the philosophy of the Western civilization, and shown how it is based on the notion of conflict and brought evidence from its field of thoughts illustrating this fact, and mentioned some of its practices or its field of thoughts, it is important, as much as possible, to try to illustrate the philosophy of the Islamic civilization, or as it may be referred to, the philosophy of the last prophethood through which the presence of prophethood in civilization and human history were concluded. We should also add some practical examples that have been applied, and continue to be applied from the world around us, in spite of the state of backwardness within which today's Muslims live, and to show how these examples continue

to entice men from contemporary civilization, regardless of how far up on the ladder of civilization he may be and no matter how distorted, mutilated or false Islam has been made to appear in his eyes by its enemies. It is these very values that so many have come to admire and believe in, regardless of how far up or down on the ladder of civilization and economic standards people may be and no matter how much Islam has been distorted by those who fight it in every way they can.

Mercy to the Worlds

Mercy with all its different aspects and objectives is the main fundamental upon which the philosophy of the Islamic civilization is based, and its primary aim in terms of that which is sought at a human level. The Glorious Qur'ân defined the message of the last Prophet and defined its purpose in the verse:

> ***{"And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to the worlds."}*** [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

Those who have even the least bit of knowledge of the Arabic language understand that the word 'worlds' is not restricted to the world of human beings but includes other classes, too. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing..."}***
>
> [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 38]

Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, has created all creatures with their different anatomies and functions from the same origin, so that they are on fraternal terms with each other because of this common origin. In this context, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"Allah has created every [living] creature from water. And of them are those that move on their stomachs, and of them are those that walk on two legs, and of them are those that walk on four. Allah creates what He wills. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent."}*** [An-Nûr (The Light): 45]

Mercy is the highest level of sublimity, sympathy, compassion and charity. It is also the source of all praiseworthy attributes and features and the target and basis of the *Sharî'ah*. Allah has decreed that the mercy people show others is a cause for the bestowal of His mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah's far reaching mercy includes how people are merciful among themselves. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"Merciful people will be treated with mercy by the Entirely Merciful (Allah). Be merciful to those who are on the earth and He Who is above the heavens will be merciful to you."*[1]

In the Islamic civilization, mercy is the primary standard according to which admirable behavior that serves to prevent harshness, dispute and disparagement is judged or held onto.

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{So, by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you."}***
>
> [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 159]

Mercy in the Battlefield

Upon understanding that mercy is one of the uppermost values of Islam, it is not strange to find that this mercy is even applied in the battlefield – a field that is known to be an arena of confrontation, the use of force and psychological and physical mobilization – where any violation of Islamic values, at the foremost of which is mercy, is completely impermissible. It is not permitted to kill children, women, old men and worshippers. It is also not permitted, for instance, to cut down trees or slaughter animals but for food. There are many examples of such manners and values from the rich history of Islamic values, wars and battles. Indeed, in Islam, wars are not to be waged except for the spread and circulation of mercy, the establishment of the freedom to choose and the prevention of all persecutions, coercion and violence. In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî, who deemed it *Sahih* (Authentic) and *Hasan* (Approved) *Hadith*.

{"And fight them until there is no Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism, i.e. worshipping others besides Allah)."}

[Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 39]

This means to fight them until there is no compulsion and coercion to accept other than what one wishes.

Mercy to animals

Mercy, which, as mentioned, is the basis and target of the Islamic civilization, is not, as we have mentioned before, restricted to the world of human beings, but includes the whole universe with its animals and plants. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

"There is a reward for (being beneficent to) every living animal."(1)

The Prophet also said:

"A woman entered Hellfire because of a cat that she had tied up. She did not either feed it or let it free so that it could eat from the insects of the earth, until it died out of hunger."(2)

Allah also promised the Muslim Paradise for rescuing an animal from thirst. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

"While a man was walking, he felt thirsty and (thus he) went down a well and drank from it. On coming out of it, he saw a dog panting and eating mud due to his excessive thirst. The man said, "This (dog) is suffering from the same thing I suffered from." So he (went down the well), filled his shoe with water, caught hold of it with his mouth, climbed up and let the dog drink. Allah thanked him for his (good) deed and forgave him."(3)

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *Musâqâh* (Sharecropping).

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *At-Tawbah* (Repentance).

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *Musâqâh* (Sharecropping).

Gentleness and the exploitation of resources

More than this, Islamic civilization instills within its people the sense of responsibility for protecting natural resources in addition to treating animals kindly. Indeed, mercy towards animals has led the Islamic civilization to designate places for sick animals.

While nature and its elements and creatures must be dealt with kindly, there must be neither idolization of any particular aspect of nature or the elimination of man's mind on the one hand, nor conflict with or the abuse of nature on the other. On the contrary, the exploitation of resources must be carried out with kindness. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason."}

[Al-Jâthiyah (The Kneeling): 13]

{"And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason. And [He has subjected] whatever He multiplied for you on the earth of varying colors. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who remember. And it is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships plowing through it, and [He subjected it] that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful."} [An-Nahl (The Bees): 12-14]

In this respect, Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Verily, Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die without pain."[1]

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî, who deemed it *Sahih* (Authentic) and *Hasan* (Approved) *Hadith*.

Indeed, Allah will call to account the Muslim on the Day of Judgment for the abuse of natural entities. Even a sparrow will complain to Allah that it was killed wastefully, Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Whoever kills a sparrow frivolously, it will complain to Allah, Exalted be He, on the Day of Resurrection, saying, 'O Lord! So-and-so killed me frivolously and did not kill me for any benefit'."(1)

In the Islamic civilization, Allah is the source of all forms of mercy, the aim of one's faith, the Entirely Merciful and the Especially Merciful. Allah is not the oppressive enemy that targets, confronts and conflicts with man.

Brotherhood and Unity of Origin

Among the underlying bases of the Islamic civilization and philosophy is that all human beings descend from the same family and that they are brothers, whether they like this or not. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his spouse (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand (your mutual rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah is Ever an All-Watcher over you."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 1]

He, Glory be to Him, also says:

{"O mankind! Indeed We have created you from male and female and made you into peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous..."}

[Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Hereby, there is no reason for arrogance and discrimination due to differences in color, race, nationality or sex since equality is already determined by the origin of creation and the unity of origin. Rather, superiority

(1) Related by An-Nasâ'î, Chapter on *Ad-Dahâyâ* (Sacrifices).

is based on fair competition and acquisition in the light of equal opportunities. In fact, righteousness is the criterion for dignity. In this regard, Islam does not consider natural differences that man has nothing to do with. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

"You are sons of Adam, and Adam (was created) from dust."(1)

The Prophet (PBUH) also forbade bragging of one's ancestors, by saying:

"Let the people cease to boast of their ancestors. They will certainly be of less account with Allah than the beetle which pushes dung with its nose."

[Related by Imâm Ahmad]

In his Farewell Sermon, the Prophet (PBUH) stressed such basic and cultural aspects underlining the constituents and philosophy of the Islamic civilization as well as the importance of protecting it against becoming weak. Considering this, the Prophet (PBUH) predicted the perpetration of violations against such natural rights.

Diversity of creation in general, and humans in particular is among the most stressed upon facts in the Islamic civilization and philosophy, as stated by the *Sharî'ah*. Moreover, it is a natural and universal law in life. It is also a means of growth and development and a field of interaction. Allah, Exalted be He, has created us from the same origin and made us peoples and tribes. Among Allah's Signs is the diversity of human languages and colors. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."} [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Allah also says:

{"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge."}

[Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 22]

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, Chapter on *"Al-Adab"* (General Behavior).

He also says:

> *{"And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ, except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that (to give mercy or not) He has created them..."}* [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 118, 119]

Some exegetes of the Qur'ân interpret this verse to mean that Allah has created mankind with the aim to make it diverse. Accordingly, the cause of creation, according to them, is diversity, which leads to enrichment, development, growth, and cognitive and cultural interaction. Hence, the existence of "the other" is essential for the continuity and exchange of ideas in life as well as fair competition and interaction.

Diversity as a Means of Integration

The Islamic civilization and philosophy differ from other civilizations by considering this diversity as a means of coexistence, cooperation, integration and knowledge. Allah, the Almighty, says:

> *{"...And made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."}* [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Thereby, the more one does good deeds (by dealing well with others), the more pious and lofty one becomes. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{"...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you..."}* [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Moreover, the most loved by and closest to Allah is the one who is the most beneficial to the people. When asked about the best among the people, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

> *"The best among the people is the one who is the most beneficial to them."*[1]

In the Islamic civilization, man is an honored creature, regardless of his color, race and even belief. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) Related by At-Tabarânî in *"Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabîr"* (The Great Lexicon) 3/209/2, and deemed as a *Sahih Hadîth* by Sheik Nâsirud-Dîn Al-Albânî in "The *Sahih Hadîth* Series".

{"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam..."}

[Al-Isrā' (The Night Journey): 70]

Such divine honor and human dignity will not be realized if they suffer any violence, terrorism or coercion. That is, the realization of dignity and honor requires the freedom of will and choice. Thus, coercion, violence, terrorism, intimidation and oppression are forms of aggression against humanity and man's dignity. Such practices are also considered as forms of practicing despotic authority over other humans and transgressing Allah's will by insulting His honored creation. Humans are creatures with reason, so they are responsible, and responsibility requires freedom. How can one be deprived of the freedom of action and then be accountable for one's deeds?!

That is why the slogan of the Islamic civilization, philosophy and discourse to all people is summarized in Allah's Words:

{"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

The role of the Muslim who follows the footsteps of the Prophet (PBUH) is to explain the right path and exhort people to follow it, and to explain the path of injustice, coercion and corruption of man's dignity and freedom.

Accordingly, coercing others is a kind of disobedience to Allah's ordinances. How can coercion be practiced in the name of religion and obedience to Allah while He says, ***"...no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."***?! Can we obey Allah by violating His ordinances?! The Muslim cannot hear this slogan then coerce others. On the contrary, refraining from coercing and forcing people to embrace Islam is true obedience to Allah, Exalted be He.

As long as we accept the diversity of creation, we have to believe in the diversity of religions, cultures and creeds. Without the existence of disbelievers, there would be no need for the verse stating: ***{"There is no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."}***.

Lest the love of good may lead the believer who follows the Prophet's example to force people to follow the right path, Allah, Exalted be He,

has forbidden forcing people to follow the religion and He has accurately specified this mission. In this context, Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"... [O Muhammad], then only upon you is [the responsibility for] clear notification."}*** [An-Nahl (The Bees): 82]

Allah also says:

> ***{"...And there is not upon the Messenger except [the duty of] clear notification."}*** [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 18]

Allah disapproves of what may happen in this regard, even when it is for the good of people. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed – all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?"}*** [Yûnus (Jonah): 99]

Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"You are not over them a controller."}*** [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 22]

Moreover, He, Exalted be He, has settled this issue saying:

> ***{"We are most knowing of what they say, and you are not over them a tyrant. But remind by the Qur'ân whoever fears My threat."}*** [Qâf: 45]

There are long verses in the Noble Qur'ân that deal with this matter in order to make the believer cautious and aware of how to perform *Da'wah* (the call to Islam).

Hence, we may say that *Jihâd* (i.e., fighting in the cause of Allah) has basically been legalized to achieve freedom of choice and prevent coercion. According to the Islamic civilization and philosophy, a Muslim has to strive in the cause of Allah to fulfill the collective or individual obligations(1).

(1) A collective obligation or duty is that which is obligatory to be fulfilled by all Muslims, but if a sufficient group of Muslims fulfills it, there will be no sin upon the rest of the Muslims.

Consequently, a Muslim has to give his property and self in order to ensure people's freedom of choice, protect their will and preserve their dignity. Bearing that in mind, he should have the following two verses as his slogan:

{"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

{"And fight them until there is no Fitnah..."}

[Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 39]

In its most obvious meaning, *Fitnah* means to be violent with people, compelling them so as to force them to do things against their will. Accordingly, there is a great difference between terrorism, violence and extremism on one side, and the great concept of *Jihâd* on the other side, since *Jihâd* is used to protect people from terrorism, violence and extremism.

There is not enough room to talk about *Jihâd* in detail, or its fields and various means or indicate that fighting in the cause of Allah is one of these means. *Jihâd* is also the exceptional case of deterring aggression and injustice which may afflict homelands and humans, and preventing people's dignity being insulted or dehumanizing them. In general, *Jihâd* is intended to protect man and society, but not to build them since there are other means to accomplish this mission. In this respect, Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive against them with it [i.e. the Qur'ân] a great striving."}

[Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 52]

The Noble Qur'ân, with all of its implications, messages, notions, psychological and mental refinement and *Fiqhî* rulings, is the criterion for *Jihâd*. Moreover, the miracle of Islam is not the result of power or violence, but it is an absolute, continuing intellectual and cognitive miracle that focuses on the construction and reformation of good humans.

The Civilization of Knowledge

In fact, the Islamic civilization focuses on knowledge. The first verse to be revealed is Allah's Command:

{"Recite!"} [Al-`Alaq (The Clot): 1]

The Verse of *Jihâd* was not revealed except when the Muslim society was attacked; only to deter aggression. Knowledge is the real, flexible power that elevates man's mind, builds his will, corrects his reason and protects his dignity and status. In addition, education and knowledge are the real and greatest forms of *Jihâd*.

The Muslim nation has not been brought to people according to geography, color, race or class, but it has been brought to and formed of all such factors. It also has been formed by Allah's command *{"Recite!"}* and for knowledge to be available to all people. It is the only nation that has been formed through a book (i.e., Qur'ân). It has expanded due to reflection and has attracted all races from all geographies, colors and social status. That is why the Muslim nation has produced a human civilization able to contain all races, colors and geographies.

The Islamic civilization is the source of human universality, integration and coexistence. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"... That you may know one another..."}

[Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

The seal of the prophethood in the Islamic nation represents the comprehensive prophetic message as it believes in all the previous prophets. Moreover, this prophethood started from the old messages and completed the prophetic guidelines to become a historical, human entity. Among the last verses to be revealed was:

{"... This day I have perfected for you your religion..."}

[Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 3]

The true religion is the one which was incorporated in the message of Adam and all the prophets and then was perfected by Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"My parable among the prophets is that of a man who built a house and did a good and complete job, apart from the space of one brick in a corner (which he did not put in its place). The people started to walk around that building, admiring it and saying, 'If only that brick were put in its place.' (Among the prophets,) I am (like) that brick and I am the Seal of Prophets."[1]

Hence, the seal of the Prophethood represents the universality of humanity, the prophetic message and civilization. Thus, its main message is to convey Islam in a clear way, spread mercy to all creatures, repel aggression and protect people against oppression, violence and persecution as Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"And fight them until there is no Fitnah..."}

[Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 39]

Consequently, depriving people of free will, dehumanizing them and coercing them to embrace Islam are much greater than killings as Allah says:

{"...And Fitnah[2] is worse than killing..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 217]

Among the most serious issues of today are the distortion of the goals and meanings of *Jihâd* in addition to the confusion in the concepts of *Jihâd*, terrorism, violence and extremism. However, *Jihâd* has been legalized to treat these other problems and prevent them from happening.

The attempts of excluding the concept of *Jihâd* from the educational, cultural and media institutions as well as the curricula under the pretext of drying the sources of terrorism without producing a moderate alternative or correcting some existing or potential deviations contributes to the aggravation of terrorism. It has become clear that Islam is the target, not

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *"Al-Manâqib"* (Virtues and Merits of the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions).

(2) *Fitnah*: Polytheism and disbelief after one has believed in Allah. It also means a trial, a calamity, an affliction or setting up rivals in worship with Allah, etc.

terrorism, violence or extremism. Nevertheless, this has turned out to have some benefits as it contributes to increase the nation's revival, identify its enemy and urge it to stick to its Islamic values.

Jihâd is one of the tools that refine the nation, promote it and put it on the right path. Meanwhile, it is not an uncontrollable movement or a blind power; rather, it involves ethics, laws and goals that must be followed. Moreover, *Jihâd* is a great act of worship; namely, the pinnacle of Islam.

The occurrence of some deviations, mistakes, exceptional cases on battlefields, or aggression when fulfilling some rights and procedures or applying rulings, does not affect the real essence of *Jihâd* nor invalidate it. On the contrary, it leads to correcting its procedures since the end does not justify the means in Islam. With this in mind, we can say that *Jihâd* is a cultural, human action, but not a violent, terrorist conduct. Furthermore, some of the narrow-minded people, who have poor *Fiqhî* knowledge, judge Muslims as disbelievers because of some mistakes they commit; apply to Muslims the rulings stated in the Qur'anic verses pertaining to disbelievers and hypocrites; abuse lives, properties and general security; terrify societies; kill people indiscriminately; transgress the lives of children, women, etc; and incorrectly apply *Shar'î* rulings to societies stigmatizing them as being abodes of war[1] or disbelief in order to justify their actions. These aforementioned acts distort the real meaning of *Jihâd* and abuse its rulings, concepts, ethics and goals. Further, the enemies of Islam may be involved in creating this distortion of the image of Islam and *Jihâd*, and may even employ some simple-minded Muslims for this aim.

In fact, the basic rule of Islam is to secure peace and safety of both individuals and societies. The permission to fight is an exceptional case legalized to repel aggression and oppression, protect safety, achieve freedom of choice and prevent *Fitnah*. In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

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(1) It is the land inhabited by non-Muslims with whom Muslims have no peace treaty and who pose a danger for Islam.

{"Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory."} [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 39]

Islam addresses "the other" with wisdom and good instruction. Disseminating knowledge and persuasion are the means of this religion and the fields of its action. Islam is the cultural determinant in the construction of human civilization, using pen as its tool and weapon.

Indeed, Islam is the religion of peace. Its approach of *Da'wah* is to stress peace and safety and substitute dialogue for conflicts. In Islam, this is not an option but it is an obligation and compliance with Allah's command as He says:

{"O you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 208]

Accordingly, peace and security are among the attributes of the believers and the obligations prescribed by Allah. Deviating from these attributes and obligations is the way of Satan. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...So let those beware who dissent from his [i.e. the Prophet's] order, lest Fitnah strike them or a painful punishment."}

[An-Nûr (The Light): 63]

If the Muslims should fight according to the conditions and rules of *Jihâd* as determined by *Fiqhî* references from the texts and then, after being in the battle, the enemy wanted to conclude a truce, the Muslims have to submit to Allah's ordinance stated in the following Verse:

{"And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah..."} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 61]

Even if the Muslims have the upper hand over the enemy, peace will still be the appropriate atmosphere for *Da'wah*, as *Da'wah* uses reason, not force or oppression, as its tool. In addition, violence has never brought any good, and Allah confers upon kindness that which He does not confer upon violence. To support this, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The strong man is not the one who wrestles well but the strong man is the one who controls himself when he is in a fit of rage."(1)

Investigating history and reality will prove that Islam has been disseminated all over the whole world, in spite of the weakness and backwardness of the Muslims. It has been spread through reason and peace, but not through wars and force.

We can reassuringly say that Islam's aim is to provide security, peace and safety, which, in turn, provides an appropriate atmosphere that guarantees its dissemination. That is why Allah, Exalted be He, has described Al-Hudaybiyah Peace Treaty as "a manifest conquest". Indeed, the means and tools of peace and freedom, and the weapon of reason have proved to be more effective than those of conflict and fighting to which the enemy has led us. By simple human calculations and an investigation of history we can perceive that the enemies of Islam have the most oppressive power, while the Muslims have the utmost reason and justice. Therefore, it is always a mercy from Allah when He, Exalted be He, keeps the Muslims away from fighting, which is detestable in Islam. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"And Allah repelled those who disbelieved, in their rage not having obtained any good. And sufficient was Allah for the believers in battle..."} [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 5]

Allah also says:

{"Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 216]

Peace and security, either political or social, are among the most solemn blessings granted by Islam, since Allah bestowed peace and safety upon the tribe of Quraysh as it would be the main base of Islam. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe [saving them] from fear."} [Quraysh (The Tribe of Quraysh): 3, 4]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *"Al-Adab"* (Good Manners).

Security, peace and the abatement of violence and terrorism are among the most important features, as well as criteria, of a civilized society.

Noticeably, the Muslims' *Qiblah* (prayer direction) is called the Sacred House. It is the place to which Muslims direct their faces five times a day during prayers, as well as the place to which they set off to perform *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) one time at least in their life-time and *'Umrah* (Lesser Pilgrimage) whenever they have the ability to do so. The Sacred House, according to all of its descriptions and relative rulings, is a source of peace and safety. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"...And whoever enters it [i.e. the Sacred House] shall be safe..."}*** [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 97]

It is prohibited to fight, commit aggression, cut a tree or hunt and kill an animal in the Sacred Mosque. The one who performs *Hajj* or *'Umrah* savors these great corollaries as *Hajj* constitutes a training period for peace and safety, rectifying one's behavior, rejecting sins and resolutely deciding not to commit them again. By performing the rituals of *Hajj*, a *Hâji* (one who is performing *Hajj*) or *Mu'tamir* (one who is performing *'Umrah*) enters a period of peace with oneself, the environment, society and all creatures, constituting a pattern of great meanings that one remembers every time one performs the prayer while directing one's face to the Sacred House every day and night.

Moreover, the Arabs of the pre-Islamic period, who later became the main base of Islam and carried it to all the people, assigned four months with the label "The Sacred Months". Forming one-third of the year, these months were a period of truce and sacred peace that could not be violated. When Islam came, it affirmed the sanctity of these months. In this respect, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

> ***{"Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve [lunar] months in the register of Allah [from] the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred..."}***
>
> [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 36]

He also says:

{They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is great [sin]."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 217]

Consequently, peace as well as absence of violence and confrontation is the rule while confrontation and violence are the exception. Confrontation and violence are only legalized to repel aggression and oppression. Looking into the past history and the present state of the Muslim nation and civilization reveals that Muslims were and still are the targets of aggression and imperialism. However, by following the principles of Islam, the Muslim nation has managed to constitute a great defensive force, protecting the nation from falling down and becoming disbanded on one side, and a great impulsive force, enabling them to progress and overcome any weaknesses on the other side. As a result, the principles of the Islamic civilization has managed to reverse the cultural postulate that states: A defeated nation is always fond of imitating the dominant one. The case is different for the Islamic civilization. That is, the civilization and principles of the defeated, Islamic nation are much stronger than the power of the victorious one, as the victorious nation starts to believe in and spread the values of the defeated, Islamic one.

Cultural Features

In general, the Islamic civilization and philosophy or the Islamic values stated in the Noble Qur'ân and *Sunnah* involve the following:

- Encompassing the whole creation with mercy, as Allah, Glorified be He, says:

  {"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds."} [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

- Representing the continuity of the Islamic message delivered by all Prophets, starting from Adam and ending with Muhammad (PBUH). Allah, the Most High, says:

{"He has ordained for you for religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which He has revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion..."} [Ash-Shûrâ (The Counsel): 13]

He also says:

{"... This day I have perfected for you your religion..."}

[Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 3]

- Calling to accept human diversity as a universal fact, as Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {"And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ, except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He has created them..."} [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 117, 118]

- Calling for coexistence, cooperation and integration among all civilizations and cultures. In this regard, Allah says:

  {"...And made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."} [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

- Acknowledging "the other" and considering them as members of the society with whom discussions, cultural dialogue and *Da'wah* are conducted. This is in addition to calling them to Islam, instructing them wisely and in a good way, discussing with them in a way that is most benevolent, and respecting their rights of citizenship. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

  "(Beware,) if anyone wrongs a Mu'âhid (a person who is granted the pledge of protection by the Muslims), diminishes his right, charges him with work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall plead for him on the Day of Resurrection."[1]

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(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, Chapter on *"Al-Kharâj Wa Al-Imârah Wa Al-Fay'"* (Tribute, Rule and Spoils).

This is illustrated even more by the fact that many Western philosophers and thinkers, who call for discourse among civilizations, have been inspired by the spirit of the tolerant Andalusian University of Cordoba during the Islamic rule in Spain as a model of coexistence. On the other hand, the (non-Muslim) leaders of the so-called "Restoration Wars", which followed the Islamic rule, established crematoria and inquisition courts and also tortured, burnt and displaced those who had different religions and creeds.

- Providing security, protection, piety and justice for others who have not harmed or attacked the Muslims as Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes, from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly."}

  [Al-Mumtahinah (The Woman Tested): 8]

- Providing protection and security for those who seek refuge with the Muslims. In this context, Allah says:

  {"And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah [i.e. the Qur'ân]. Then deliver him to his place of safety..."}

  [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 6]

- Advocating freedom of choice and man's dignity and respecting his will. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

  {"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."}

  [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

- Calling for human affinity. Allah, the Almighty, says:

  {"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female..."} [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

- Stressing that all human beings descend from the same origin since Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {"O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from one soul..."}

  [An-Nisâ' (Women): 1]

- Rejecting physical violence and confrontation except to deter aggression. In this relation, Allah says:

  {"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors."}

  [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 190]

- Feeling responsible for the universe, humanity, animals and even life itself. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {"And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you."} [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 38]

  The Prophet (PBUH) said:

  "A woman entered Hellfire because of a cat that she had tied up, and thus she did not either feed it or let it free so that it could eat the insects of the earth, until it died out of hunger."[1]

- Considering a woman as man's partner in life since she is fully competent; free to choose her husband and to have a say in the marriage contract.; has the right to obtain *Khul'*[2] and become separated; should be consulted concerning family affairs; and should not be treated badly or forced to live within a particular family. In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

  {"...And do not make difficulties for them..."}

  [An-Nisâ' (Women): 19]

  Allah also says:

  {"...And if they both desire weaning, after mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them..."} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 233]

- Acknowledging that women are legally accountable and have social, political and financial responsibilities. Allah, the Most High, says:

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(1) Related by Muslim, Chapter on *"At-Tawbah"* (Repentance and Exhortation to Repent).

(2) A kind of divorce in which a wife seeks divorce from her husband by giving him a certain compensation, or returning back the dowry which he had given her.

{"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong..."}

[At-Tawbah (Repentance): 71]

Women, also, enjoy freedom of thought, advocacy, election and even emigration. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"O you who have believed, when the believing women come to you as emigrants, examine [i.e. test] them. Allah is most knowing as to their faith..."} [Al-Mumtahinah (The Woman Tested): 10]

- Adopting the principle stating that the most honorable person is the most pious one as Allah says:

  {"The most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you..."} [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Cognitive and Psychological Foundations

In addition to the above-mentioned features of the Islamic civilization, we can refer to some foundations on which the cultural structure is founded. These foundations constitute the psychological and cognitive principles of the cultural structure and civilizational action in addition to being a means of protection against terrorism, violence and extremism. They also achieve social harmony away from grudges, oppression or violation of human rights. These foundations are as follows:

- **Affinity in the Universal Sphere:** All human beings are brothers and the relations between them are governed by the Islamic teachings in order to build an open-minded personality that attracts others to embrace Islam. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

  {"The believers are but brothers..."}

  [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 10]

  The Prophet (PBUH) said:

  "None of you will have (complete) faith until he likes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself."[1]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *"Al-Îmân"* (Faith).

➢ Observing Justice Even with One's Rivals

The absence of justice on both political and social levels is the cause of violence and extremism. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct..."}

[An-Nahl (The Bees): 90]

Allah also says:

{"...And do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness..."}

[Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 8]

Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"...And when you speak [i.e. testify], be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative..."} [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 152]

➢ Benevolence

Benevolence is a level higher than justice. Justice is to provide equal opportunities and fulfill the rights of others. Benevolence is not only to give people their rights but also to waive some of our own rights for their sake. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Verily, Allah has enjoined goodness to everything."[1]

➢ Mercy

Mercy is the aim of the *Sharî'ah*, as Allah says:

{"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds."} [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

➢ Forgiveness

In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Take what is given freely, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant."} [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 199]

Addressing the disbelievers of Mecca on the day of the Conquest of Mecca, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Go! You are free to go!"

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it as Sahîh (Authentic) and *Hasan* (Approved) *Hadîth*.

> **Altruism**

Altruism involves favoring other people over oneself. Allah, the Most High, says:

{"...But give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation..."} [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 9]

> **Love**

In this context, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"None of you will have (complete) faith until he likes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself."[1]

> **Equality**

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"People are sons of Adam, and Allah created Adam from dust."[2]

> **Dealing with Others in a Way That Is Most Benevolent**

This principle involves being benevolent to settle enmities and repel transgression as Allah, the Almighty, says:

{"And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend."} [Fussilat (The Expounded): 34]

> **Acknowledging Others and Discussing with Them in a Way That Is Most Benevolent**

In this respect, Allah, the Most Great, says:

{"And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best..."} [Al-ʿAnkabût (The Spider): 46]

> **Calling to Islam Wisely, using Good Words**

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction..."} [An-Nahl (The Bees): 125]

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on "Al-Îmân" (Faith).

(2) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it as *Gharîb* (Single) *Hadîth*.

> Adopting Polite Dialogue and Etiquette of Knowledge

This principle aims at stressing equity and kindness of dialogue as well as building human universalities. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 64]

Indeed, there are many other matters that can be discussed here. The aforementioned points are just examples and models that aim at explaining Islamic civilization and culture. Moreover, these points are not ideal, imaginary values that are difficult to be applied. Rather, they are exemplary guidelines and have been applied many times throughout the Islamic civilization across all its different eras. They may be applied a little in some eras and on a wide-scale in others, but they have never disappeared from the Muslim society. These examples are proofs of the eternity of Islam and its ability of cultural production anytime and anywhere.

Consultation as a Means of Protection and Cure

As a social, political, educational and administrative value, starting from the family, school, university, institute, club, curricula and media to civil organizations and political institutions, consultation is the core matter and the main field for discussing and exchanging opinions, and containing the reasons that lead to violence, extremism, terrorism and all forms of fanaticism and congestion. Consultation is also the cure for violence and extremism since it is the only channel through which the individual and society can express their opinions, and thus prevent the occurrence of any suppression.

Consultation is:

> The most outstanding characteristic of the Muslim society and the Islamic civilization. Allah, the Almighty, describes the Muslim society saying:

{"...And whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves..."} [Ash-Shûrâ (The Counsel): 38]

To set the main principle of consultation across the ages, Allah, Exalted be He, said to the Prophet (PBUH):

{"...Consult them in the matter..."}

[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 159]

If we should scrutinize these two Qur'anic Verses according to their historical context, (i.e., being revealed fifteen centuries ago), we would find that not only are they suitable for all times, but the norm at the time was against the idea of consultation as the rulers were either the gods or their representatives who would enforce the orders of the gods and thus they could not be disobeyed or opposed, since doing so was considered as being guilty and disobedient to the gods' orders. Therefore, Islam came to dissociate rule from Divinity for the first time in human history, put the ruler back into his human position and assign to him all matters applicable to humans, such as doing good deeds, the tendency to commit wrong acts and being in need of others. Islam has also set the political frames and the social values in order to prevent political despotism and social injustice, which generate violence, extremism and terrorism.

Thus, if we put these two Qur'anic Verses in their historical context, we shall realize the necessity of this early treatment for the protection of the society.

- A means to help individuals be aware of their value and entity in addition to the value of their opinion. Furthermore, it helps them form independent characters and be satisfied about their future, without facing any surprises, as they participate in the process of making their own decisions.
- An opportunity for exchanging opinions, cultures, dialogues and points of views. Consultation constitutes a political and social space very similar to economic free zones, away from any censorship or restrictions. Thus, consultation represents an opportunity to establish freedom, open channels of communication and release political, intellectual and social congestion.

- An opportunity for making use of all opinions when making a decision, since consultation enables one to exchange views and experiences.
- A means to get rid of dictatorship and autocracy, which lead to monopolizing opinions, judgments and properties. Moreover, consultation urges the feelings of responsibility and the tendency to monitor oneself.
- A field that involves exchanging opinions and scrutinizing them in order to formulate a moderate, balanced opinion, away from excessiveness and exaggeration. Thus, consultation is the field in which all forms of rebellion, disobedience, violence or extremism are absorbed, points of views are introduced, minds are drawn on and solutions are suggested.
- A tool for managing all affairs in life since its role is not restricted to electing a ruler but it goes beyond that to managing all affairs in life. The main reason for the present calamity, in our opinion, lies in the absence of the culture and practices of consultation and dialogue as well as their suspension from being applied in real life.

The problem we suffer, as a result of backwardness, is that our life has turned into many slogans about which we boast while they have no place in our practical life. The condition of consultation has become similar to that of the one who searches for a commendable ruling and misses an obligatory one. After fourteen centuries, which have witnessed unaccountable incidents of sufferings and disasters resulting from political despotism, all we think of doing is to raise a problematic question: Is consultation obligatory or optional? We focus only on the necessity of consultation, its concepts and connotations instead of its application.

We may be induced to participate in battles in which we waste our energies, properties and even our people without precisely realizing their dimensions or costs. How much time, effort and wealth we have spent – since the intellectual and political battles are dominated by our opponents – in order to show the advantages of consultation versus the disadvantages of democracy as well as their contradictions! We have participated in cultural and political battles against democracy and accused its propagators of disbelief; as if the

battle was between democracy and consultation! We have not realized, as a result of ignoring our reality, that our real battle today is between democracy and political despotism, which is wide-spread in our countries. Accordingly, fighting democracy means to take the side of political despotism, while democracy, in fact, gives us chances which political despotism deprives us of. An example of this is represented by considering the fight against democracy as a means of administration and a rule, assuming that it is a Western value that does not belong to us, believing that political despotism and social injustice are the outcome of our culture and civilization!

The same thing also applies to all the wealth, martyrs and sacrifices we have offered in fighting Marxism and Communism because they contradict Islam in their battle against Capitalism. We witnessed what was the end of those who resisted Communism for the sake of Capitalism, and how they became viewed as criminals that did not enjoy the rights of war criminals. Thus, war continues and we wage wars within boundaries set by others. Our countries live in a state of violence, tension and extremism as a natural result of the continuous failure, depression, lack of consultation and dialogue and blockage of the channels of expression. Meanwhile, others have developed tools and methods to survey public opinion. These tools represent a science that can never go wrong. Many polls can predict the results of elections. As for us, we still focus only on the obligation of consultation and pay no attention to the beneficial fields that are good for our nation, our civilization and the whole world.

Summary

We have to reemphasize that violence and extremism are two complex phenomena that are due to many reasons. Individual violence may be attributed to one reason in most cases. But when a problem reaches the level of being a phenomenon, it will be unreasonable to attribute it to only one reason or assume that it can be eliminated through security interference.

To sum up, we can say that among the main reasons for the emergence and development of the phenomenon are the monopolization of authority and wealth and using a *Shar'ī* coverage of the phenomenon in addition to the resulting practices that may constitute separate reasons for the aggravation of the phenomenon.

We can also say that the monopolization of authority involves monopolizing wealth since political despotism causes oppression, expulsion, tyranny, spread of fear and terror, dehumanization, depreciation of dignity, suppression of mental faculties, deprivation of free creative thinking, blockage of the channels of expression, and prevention of being involved in decision-making processes. Moreover, political despotism results in using power instead of conviction, giving advantages to the ruler's trustees instead of those of knowledge and experience and extending the sphere of suspicions and worries due to spying on people's actions and probing into people's point of views. This can lead to practices of revenge, arrogance, inferiority complexes and the cover-up of failures.

Political despotism is usually supported by unsuccessful people who take it as a tool to achieve their goals. Hence, we can say that dictators and tyrants are the ones who monopolize authority and turn their people into submissive, belittled followers. People, in return, bluff their leaders to the extent that they believe the insincere praise of their followers. These leaders are also misled to believe the false titles given to them by their followers, such as the titles and traits of inspiration, bravery, intelligence, etc. In this way, defeats are turned into victories and failures are turned into success due to such misleading dealings. Moreover, mutual enslavement dominates the whole community since these dictators submit to their people in order to win their support and ensure the continuity of their rule, while their people, in return, submit to them to maintain their interests and benefits which they cannot obtain by themselves. As a result, such interests are guaranteed as long as the dictator is in power.

In such a suffocating and oppressive atmosphere that affects all things and deprives people of their dignity and humanity, the security institutions and the army turn from defending the homeland and resisting enemies to protecting the ruler and chasing the people. At this point, individuals turn into time-bombs ready to explode and become violent and extreme since they have lost everything and are pursued all the time.

To guarantee the ability to give benefits to the supporting armies and security systems and to guarantee the ability to spend on favored figures, a despotic ruler must monopolize wealth and property. Here-

upon, the financial capital is employed according to the ruler's policies, and corruption extends to reach all aspects of social and economic life. Consequently, societies suffer paralysis, social dynamics stop, unemployment increases, the sense of deprivation grows, poverty and suppression prevail and grudges escalate. Moreover, values are violated and people are provoked because their dogmas, values and social traditions are attacked. In such a society, only vice and permissiveness grow, the grip of the systems of suppression and spying become tighter, and the freedom to commit shameful acts increases.

In such an unbalanced atmosphere, which deprives people of a proper life and hinders their efforts to earn their living, express their opinions and accomplish their ambitions not to mention the provocation which people suffer at the hands of the riffraff, the society turns into a field full of time-bombs ready to explode or a volcano that may erupt and destroy everything.

In this atmosphere, unemployment, poverty, criminality, delinquency, organized crime, vagrancy, family dissolution and the formation of gangs who enjoy legal and illegal support under the despotic regimes join together to form the phenomenon of extremism.

This political and financial despotism requires a class of well-educated people who do not assume their responsibilities, and some authority-biased scholars who sell their religion for cheap, worldly benefits. These elements issue authority-biased *Fatwâs* and try to find political and religious justifications for the regime's despotism. Each despotic regime has its own scholars who falsely advocate it for the sake of money and wealth. However, we were warned against committing the religious faults of the previous nations that caused their destruction and extinction. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> ***{"O you who have believed, indeed many of the scholars and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert [them] from the way of Allah. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah - give them tidings of a painful punishment."}*** [Al-Tawbah (Repentance): 34]

This Qur'anic Verse addresses the authority-biased scholars, not the oppressors themselves, since the former represent the most dangerous factors of misguidance, lack of awareness and inefficiency. At this degree, the crisis reaches an unsacred coalition or trinity represented by the following:

- **Political Injustice** (i.e., the monopolization of authority)
- **Social and Economical Injustice** (i.e., the monopolization of wealth)
- **Dictatorial False Beliefs** (i.e., the monopolization of false, religious interpretations and the innovation of *Shar'î* justifications that provide a *Shar'î* coverage for such despotism)

There is also an important element in the industry of extremism and violence. Here, we mean the mentality of preparing armies which are manipulated by the despotic regime, making use of instigations, enthusiastic speeches and enflamed emotions, and flooding the cultural and religious arenas with a combination of principles and slogans that inflame the feelings of the public. This is in addition to linking such principles and slogans to *Jihâd* and martyrdom as a means of seeking the reward of the Hereafter. The people are also agitated and provoked by talking about the dangers and pressures of the situation and life, and then they are left to carry out their destiny. This is the case after the rulers gain power without identifying the legal policies of their movements, laying down objective and well-studied plans necessary for applying such policies, or accurately estimating the surrounding circumstances and the available capabilities. Subsequently, their people turn into time-bombs that, if they explode, will cause harm to both themselves and society. This is because the absence of a clear vision and strategy makes these enthusiastic people liable to be exploited, provoked and indoctrinated, and to become ready to make unnecessary sacrifices till they become tools in the hands of the despotic regimes. Such regimes use them to achieve their regional and international ambitions and gain more power.

The Way of Salvation

Violence, evil, terrorism and aggression are rooted in the oppression and dominance practiced by people against each other. This oppression has taken different forms across history, as follows:

- Sometimes, they have been committed by landlords against the tenants and farmers.
- Sometimes, they have been committed by employers against their employees. There are many examples of such practices of oppression and injustice throughout history.
- Sometimes, they have been practiced by rulers in what has been known as "theocratic regimes".
- Sometimes, they have been committed in the name of religion by clergymen and priests who have sanctified their opinions and claimed to be the intercessors between Allah and His worshippers so their repentance will be accepted and their sins will be forgiven. This kind of oppression is the severest of all kinds since it is not restricted to the worldly life of these people, but it is also related to their destiny and the Hereafter.
- Sometimes, they have been practiced in the name of the class that enjoys the real interests from the revolution. Examples of this are the results of Marxism and the hell of Siberia.
- Sometimes, they have been practiced in the name of the ruling party.
- Sometimes, they have been practiced in the name of the superior race, as in the case of Nazism, whose slogan was "Germany Above All" and Fascism.
- Sometimes, they have been committed in the name of those who claim to be the „Chosen People of Allah". As mentioned in the Qur'ân, these people said:

  {"... We are the children of Allah and His beloved..."}

  [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 18]

As for the most recent form of oppression, dehumanization and deprivation of people of their rights, it can be seen in the practices committed in the name of the wars against terrorism.

Therefore, oppression, evil, violence, terrorism and the enslavement of people continue. The world cannot enjoy peace and security without stopping this oppression and getting rid of dominance. This cannot be achieved

except by returning to the sincere belief in the only one god, Allah. This belief means that all creatures have the same rights and duties in the Sight of Allah and this sameness means equality.

In addition, this belief must be guarded and protected from priests and clerks as well as the authority-biased scholars so that people are equal before their One Creator. As a result, people will worship Allah, Exalted be He, without a human mediator, and will feel that they are responsible before Him for any oppression, aggression or terrorism they may commit in this world. This is in addition to the legal rulings and punishments being applied.

Evil, violence and terrorism will never stop unless we get rid of tyrants, idols and false beliefs of every age. By doing so, we will be able to achieve justice, equal opportunities and freedom of choice, taking into consideration that this cannot be accomplished except by believing in Allah, the Most High, and disbelieving in *Tâghût* (false objects of worshipping). Allah, Exalted be He, says:

> *{And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allah and avoid Tâghût..."}*
>
> [An-Nahl (The Bees): 36]

He also says:

> *{"...So whoever disbelieves in Tâghût and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it..."}* [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

Praise be to Allah. All Glory belongs to Him, in this world and in the Hereafter!



Fiqhî Dimension in Dealing with Violence



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Today, we may be in need of a specialized study of a number of topics such as: "Fiqh Al-Badâ'il" (The thought of alternative available options); "Fiqh Al-Aqalliyyât" (The thought of minority groups); "Fiqh Al-Muwâzanât" (The thought of the balance of harm and interests); "Fiqh Al-Ma'âlât" (The thought of the outcome of following certain Fatwâs); "Fiqh Al-Mu'assasât" (The thought of Institutions); "Fiqh An-Nawâzil" (The thought of emerging, unprecedented issues); "Fiqh At-Ta 'âyush wa Al-Indimâj" (The thought of co-existence); "Fiqh Al-Muwâtanah" (The thought of the compliance of fatwâs to the conditions of citizens in a country); and "Fiqh At-Tadaafu '" (The thought of sorting out multiple evidence for one issue). Such topics should serve as our source of Sharî 'ah knowledge and cultural background.

Introduction

Violence is considered one of the most serious emerging issues in our contemporary world. It is a complex issue that is interrelated with other cultural and human issues. It is also deeply-rooted in history, thought and reality. Yet, it is a temporary phenomenon that reflects neither the true essence of the natural disposition *(Fiṭrah)* nor the religious teachings. Such a phenomenon has come to the surface due to the incipient causes leading to its emergence as well as the conditions nourishing and supporting it. In fact, violence has serious ramifications for both individuals and society. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to approach the real causes of violence, its characteristics, effects and roots. This, of course, calls for establishing a solid base for dealing with this issue of violence, from the cultural, academic, social and international perspectives, rather than just dealing with it in an abrupt, fragmentary, superficial, emotional manner that would not yield an adequate solution to overcome this grave problem.

Consequently, the sound treatment for this problem should be based on all various dimensions and aspects that contribute to violence, including the psychological, social, economic, political, regional and international ones. Above all, the presence or absence of religious and ethical factors, in particular, is among the major dimensions of this problem.

When dealing with violence, the dimension of the Islamic *Sharī'ah* should be our cultural and intellectual framework to which we refer to when dealing with the problem, whether before, during or after its occurrence. This goes back to the fact that this dimension has a strong effective presence in Islamic history, geography and the environment and society inside the Muslim world. In the meantime, it has a great impact on *'the other'* whose identity, status,

and history intersect with Islam due to shared human, ethical, cultural, constructional and civil aspects. In addition, it plays a crucial role in achieving peaceful coexistence, eliminating the causes and outcomes of tension, clashes and conflicts, building human civilizations, inculcating values of tolerance and kindness, and firmly establishing concepts such as reconciliation, competition and civility. This should not, however, be achieved at the expense of privacy, identities, nationalism or individualism. Furthermore, all this should be applied by certain methods and in a manner which is in line with the emerging needs and modern situations, while taking into consideration the various frames of reference, authorities and various backgrounds.

There is another dimension that is based upon the above Islamic dimension; namely, 'the *Fiqhî* dimension, science or approach.' This dimension relates to the legislative *Fiqhî* system, which serves as the academic or methodological method or formula concerned with issuing legal rulings, reaching solutions, suggesting alternatives and opening horizons in order to correctly put religion into practice and strike a balance between theory and practice in the overall picture of Islamic discourse and religious teachings.

I assume that tackling this problem of violence in the light of this *Fiqhî* dimension will stand as an essential gateway to observe, diagnose, treat and follow-up this problem. This dimension, however, does not dispense with the other dimensions relating to economy, society, environment, politics, culture, history, international relations and world problems.

In fact, I focused here on the *Fiqhî* dimension for many reasons, such as to adhere to accuracy, abide by the field of specialization and consideration of reality, for which the Islamic frame of reference constitutes one of its most outstanding components. I attempted to solve this problem with all possible and available means, with regard to time, work and information. Thus, any shortage that might be found would be attributed to the circumstances in which this research was written. I admit that most of the drafts of this work were written in Mecca, where I was suffering from health problems, and, on my return to Tunisia, these drafts were lost. I gathered my strength and rewrote the research all over again in a relatively short period of time, taking into consideration the deadline assigned for publication, and in response to the invitation to write about this topic.

The research revolves around the meaning of violence, the *Fiqhî* sciences, the causes of violence and how *Fiqh* handles violence. Each of these points is elaborately discussed about in its due course in this study.

I ask Allah to grant us success and indeed He is the One able to grant us this. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and may Allah's blessings and peace be upon our Prophet Muhammad and his household and companions.

The Real Meaning of Violence

The word "violence" in this research refers to violence as a linguistic term recurrent in many cultural, intellectual and scientific disciplines, and repeatedly stated by many writers who have studied, defined it and analyzed its causes, effects and solutions. All such definitions were largely influenced by the cultural, environmental, doctrinal and intellectual backgrounds of those who introduced them. This, in turn, led to discrepancies in their approach to violence, in terms of clarifying the methods of treatment as well as suggesting solutions. Hence, it is necessary, from the cognitive, objective, methodological, cultural and literary aspects, to state the precise definition of violence in this study and specify other relative issues before delving deeply into this thorny issue.

A Selected Definition of Violence

Violence is defined here as "every aggressive behavior inflicted against the self or the other, whether it is by word or deed, whether the aggressor is an individual or a group, and whether it is justifiable on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, school of thought or any emerging human or practical issue or not."[1] The aggressive conduct is that which involves aggression and injustice against the right of oneself or others.

(1) We should differentiate between physical violence and moral violence. The former is directed to the body and it has various forms. The latter occurs when one is deprived of one's basic needs or rights, or when one's identity, dignity or integrity is abused. Violence has many forms and means, whatever different names they may have, such as wars, persecution, oppression, injustice, starvation and nuclear threats. (The Arab Philosophical Encyclopedia; Arab Development Institute, 1st edition, 1986, Vol. 1, pp. 625-626).

Violence against oneself is realized when one does something that necessitates self-discipline or punishment, either in theory or practice. To illustrate, believing in extremist views or committing an extremist acts is an example of violence against the self. This may also be reflected in behaving in a manner that is not consonant with the *Fiṭrah* (i.e., natural disposition), neglecting interests, behaving in an imbalanced and immoderate manner that causes one to reproach oneself by inflicting physical, financial or professional punishment as a result of causing physical, psychological or financial harm to others.

As for violence against the other, it may refer to violence against a person or an environment. This category includes aggression against another person's life or body, or against constructions, the environment, or scientific, social or health institutions and facilities, etc.

With regard to the phrase 'by word or deed' mentioned in the above definition of violence, it actually refers to what is termed as 'verbal violence' and 'physical violence'. As for the 'verbal violence', it refers to every form of violence that is said or uttered. It has many forms, such as abuse, bitter criticism, instigation, malicious propaganda, accusation of disbelief or dishonesty, revilement and the like.

In contrast, 'physical violence' refers to any violence-related physical action committed by man. It has different forms, such as killing, cutting off parts of someone's body, wasting property, demolishing a building, ruining plants and crops, hijacking, polluting the environment, as well as any act which terrorizes others and makes them feel insecure, killing civilians, etc.

Concerning the sources of violence, they refer to the parties which engage in or cause violence, whether by practicing, justifying, instigating, triggering, planning it or sheltering those who practice it. Such sources may be represented by individuals, as in cases of stealing, killing, raping and beating, or groups, such as in cases of an aggression practiced by an ethnic group, or a group adopting a certain ideology or thought, against other individuals or groups holding different or opposing ideologies or thoughts.

Or, the source of violence may be a governmental, national or international body. This is particularly the case in instances of foreign occupation or local violence.

There are many reasons for violence. They may be religious, racial, ideological, social, political, economic or cultural. After all, violence is not religious-, national- or racial-specific. It is a human phenomenon[1]; a psychological and social state that is the product of different circumstances within environments of multiple cultures, religious backgrounds, social norms and traditions.

The causes, circumstances, components and consequences of the phenomenon of violence are very complicated. If not dealt with effectively, it can easily go from bad to worse. Ideally, the problem should be addressed at its deep roots, not just at the surface level. Part of the solution is to choose the best approach to the problem. Most importantly, any efforts to deal with violence should be as comprehensive and sophisticated as the problem itself. In addition, a protective policy should be worked out to prevent the emergence of the factors that contribute to the phenomenon of violence. It is in this way that peace and safety can be achieved in any society, offering golden opportunities for development and creativity.

Violence from an Islamic *Fiqhî* Perspective

Any given issue can be examined from different cognitive and cultural perspectives. Violence, for example, can be looked at from a political, legal, economic or social point of view. Here, we are going to give a *Fiqhî* overview on the phenomenon of violence, reflecting how Islam and its general *Fiqhî* system approach the problem.

The present multi-perspective study responds to the complicated nature of the problem, and it adopts the methodology of scientific research (collection of information: exploration of the problem, proposition of solutions and analysis of the findings). Further, it responds to a delicate principle in the *Fiqhî* studies; that is, the *Shar'î* rulings apply to the conduct of legally accountable persons, which include direct and indirect violent

(1) The Arab Philosophical Encyclopedia, 1/625-626.

behavior. Thus, violence is a behavior that has relevant *Shar'î* rulings dealing with it and it should be studied in accordance with a set of *Fiqhî* principles and regulations.

The Islamic *Fiqh* is used here as a comprehensive, consistent and integrated discipline, not as shallow, discrete units of knowledge that are not connected to reality. In this chapter, the *Fiqhî* sciences will constitute the referential scientific framework used to deal with the problem of violence. This requires a wide knowledge of the fundamentals, methods and objectives of Islamic *Fiqh*.

The *Fiqhî* sciences are connected to external factors, which determine whether or not the *Fiqhî* sciences will play an important role in achieving security and eliminating violence. These factors include non-*Fiqhî* bodies; reactions to *Fiqhî* activities, scholars and institutions; and the approach to the Islam in general.

The *Fiqhî* Sciences

The Islamic *Fiqh* can be defined as the knowledge of definite Islamic *Shar'î* rulings with their detailed proofs from the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*. It involves the rulings of what is lawful, unlawful, obligatory, supererogatory or detestable concerning human conduct and daily events and affairs. Such rulings are approved or given preponderance by the clear texts or conferred implications of the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* (of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)), using different devices and techniques; e.g. consensus, analogical deduction, rational induction, contextualization, generalization, correlation, etc.

Components of Islamic *Fiqh*

I. Practical *Shar'î* Sub-Rulings

These include the subsidiary *Fiqhî* rulings, such as the necessity to treat one's neighbors well, to be kind in speech and transactions, to correct the wrong beliefs of others; the obligation to pay *Zakâh*; the prohibition of injustice and monopoly; and the exhortation to make charitable endowments and carry out benevolent acts.

II. Detailed Proofs Relating to Practical *Shar'î* Sub-Rulings

These are the Qur'anic verses and the Prophetic *Hadîths* which pertain to the practical *Shar'î* sub-rulings. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And say to people good (words)..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 83]

This verse is a call to be kind with others. Also, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not taken out from anything but it makes it defective."[1]

This points out that it is most favorable to be kind and lenient. Concerning the permissibility to correct the wrong ideas of others, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And indeed, (either) we or you are upon guidance (i.e. rightly guided) or in plain error."} [Saba' (Sheba): 24]

III. *Shar'î* Fundamentals Underlying Practical *Shar'î* Sub-Rulings

Termed "the Fundamentals of *Fiqh*", these refer to the basics by which the sub-rulings are formulated and proved. In these fundamentals, the Glorious Qur'ân is taken as the principal source of legislation, the sacred reference for the proofs of rulings and the perfect criterion to judge human conduct and affairs of life.

Under this general principle, there come many other principles concerning the linguistic, *Shar'î*, moral, historical and cultural indications contained in the Qur'ân. These specific principles are known as the fundamentals of deducing rulings and *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion) and are determined by a context-specific cognitive content and deductive methodology.

For example, the Qur'ân contains broad basics relating to speaking courteously and treating others tolerantly. This can be deduced on two levels:

(1) Related by Muslim, the Chapter on Benevolence, Relationship and Etiquette, the Section of "the Merits of Kindness", the Encyclopedia of the *Sunnah*, the Six Books and Their Explanations, 6/2003-2004.

a) Direct exhortation to be kind with others. For instance, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"...And say to people good (words)..."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 83]

He also says:

{"Indeed, Allah enjoins justice and good conduct and giving (help) to relatives..."} [An-Nahl (The Bees): 90]

Further, Allah says:

{"And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in (a way) that is most benevolent..."}

[Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 46]

He, Exalted be He, also says:

{"Those who listen to speech and follow the best of it..."}

[Az-Zumar (The Hordes): 18]

Other verses focus on the merits of gentleness and leniency as traits of the Prophets, Attributes of the Creator, Glorified be He, and an ideal enjoined by Allah.

b) Statements indirectly related to benevolence, such as the verses that describe natural human disposition as inclining to kindness and mercy; the guidance, good and enlightenment embodied by the Holy Qur'ân; or the fact that teaching people what is right needs patience and effort, which can only be successful when accompanied by friendly treatment.

IV. *Fiqhî* or *Shar'î* Rules

These are the general codes that apply to, and underlie, the *Fiqhî* sub-rulings, serving certain *Shar'î*, scientific or human purposes; e.g. they are the tools to encompass and organize the available variety of sub-rulings, and use them to determine a *Shar'î* verdict on different human affairs.

Accordingly, there are formal, intrinsic differences between the *Fiqhî* fundamentals and the *Fiqhî* rules[1] that make them two independent sciences. Perhaps the most important difference is the subject itself. The *Fiqhî* fundamentals are the umbrella covering the detailed sub-rulings; they are wider in scope, deeper in scrutiny and more comprehensive as proofs. Thus, the nature of the *Fiqhî* fundamentals (as a distinctive discipline) is more holistic (comprehensive) than the *Fiqhî* rules.

This differentiation is an intellectual product of the Islamic arts and civilization. Awareness of the *Fiqhî* rules is very important for finding out the practical *Shar'î* sub-rulings. Knowledge of such rules would:

- help deduce the minor parts. For instance, when you know the *Fiqhî* principle that "no power, no responsibility", you will be able to say which cases are included under that principle; one will not be obligated to change a wrong situation if he is really unable to change it; one who does not know the rulings about right and wrong is excused in relation to the application of the relevant laws and policies; and many other examples.
- form a broad mentality that looks at everything comprehensively, focusing both on the surface and underlying components. It is important for Muslims to have broad and consistent attitudes when dealing with each other, as well as with non-Muslims. In fact, Islam is the ever-comprehensive religion; a universal religion that is fit for everyone, every time and everywhere.

  For example, the *Shar'î* guidelines relating to good treatment of non-Muslims can only be implemented when the far-reaching goals of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* are collectively understood.
- fulfill the purposes of the *Shar'î* rulings, since they involve the basic facts and methods to achieve these purposes.

(1) For more detail, see our book "*'Ilm Al-Qawâ'id Ash-Shar'iyyah*" (Knowledge of *Shar'î* Rules).

V. *Shar'î* Purposes

These are the goals or wise aims of the practical sub-rulings. The *Shar'î* rulings have been legislated for the best interests of people in this worldly life and their good in the Hereafter. Knowledge of these purposes is a prerequisite for the *Shar'î* sciences.

The Islamic *Sharî'ah* is purposive; any *Shar'î* judgment should have an outcome: Either to bring forth a benefit or to avert an evil. Thus, it would be wrong to deal with a matter apart from its subsequent effects. A given ruling may have different consequences in different situations.

On the other hand, it would be unwise to give the purposive aspect far more focus than the indicative and contextual aspects of a given subject. Any *Shar'î* judgment should make a balance between all the aspects and components of the matter at hand. Accordingly, the purposive aspect should not be focused on too much, which goes in line with the moderate nature of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*.

To demonstrate, in the example of kind speech and conduct, the adoption of benevolence towards a particular person, body or situation is based on an awareness of the overall purposes of coexistence with the other. In fact, it is based on a broader sense of the purpose which is related to the purposes of the whole creation and the human presence on earth.

In this example, the minor parts contribute to the larger picture: Kind treatment with the other can be a way to arouse his friendly feelings towards Muslims and even attract him to Islam. Truly, this is an important part of the message of Islam and one of the reasons for human life on earth.

VI. *Shar'î* Incidents

The *Shar'î* emerging incidents involve any event or state that happens to an individual, group, society or the world as a whole and require a *Shar'î* examination. Examples include the greenhouse effect, globalization, terrorism, cloning, electronic commerce, organ donation, etc. This concept is associated to a specific sense; that is, it refers to the emerging particulars involving unexpected, complicated and overlapping aspects.

The problem of terrorism, for example, is a world-wide phenomenon that needs a full-scale intervention to be investigated and solved. This investigation should use every available approach (*Fiqhî*, scientific, social, etc.), but this is too difficult and time-consuming. Thus, knowledge of the *Fiqh* of "new issues" is a prerequisite to the scrutiny of occasions and issues in life.

VII. *Shar'î* Exceptions

These are matters that do not fit under the general rules or patterns used to derive sub-rulings, in accordance with *Shar'î* considerations and regulations.

For example, there is a *Shar'î* and legal ruling stipulating that "averting harm is given preponderance to bringing forth benefit". However, when someone commits an act prohibited by the *Sharî'ah*, he deserves to be harmed. This is an exception, since the punishment is necessary to deter other people from committing that act. Other examples include fighting against an occupying force, punishment of a disobedient child, using force against a magician, etc.

In general, the *Shar'î* exception process requires wide knowledge, great prudence and high integrity, in order for a scholar to be able to say which case is regular and which is exceptional. This process is fully regulated by the *Sharî'ah*; the punishment of a culprit or the use of force against an enemy should be strictly governed by *Shar'î* conditions and criteria.

VIII. *Shar'î* Controversies

At the heart of "the *Fiqh* of Controversy" are the issues or questions about which Muslim scholars have different opinions. It is these controversies that caused the emergence of different *Fiqhî* schools. The reasons for the *Shar'î* controversy are related to the *Shar'î* text itself, the person who contemplates it and the facts of reality. Whether or not a controversial judgment is given preponderance is determined by the primary purposes, intended benefits, facts of reality, rational analysis and other *Shar'î* rulings.

The *Fiqh* of Controversy necessitates another important discipline: ethics of Controversy. This discipline introduces a set of underlying concepts; i.e. exploring the other view, understanding his argument, appreciating his right to differ with you, recognizing his opinion if found right, being tolerant when arguing with him, renouncing fanaticism, etc.

IX. *Shar'î* Differences

These are the points by which correlative *Shar'î* matters can be differentiated. This discipline focuses on the dissimilarities between apparently similar matters, such as the difference between presents and bribes, trade and usury, marriage and adultery, etc.

In fact, this field needs more attention and future study in order to help solve many problems facing contemporary Muslim society. For example, it is of the utmost importance to make clear the difference between terroristic activities and resistance to occupation.

X. *Shar'î* Regulations

These are the methodological and systematic matters that regulate *Shar'î* and *Fiqhî* investigations. In other words, they are the "meta-rules" that govern the detailed rules of *Sharî'ah*.

Regulation is greatly required in order to make matters well-defined and based on the facts related to them, according to realistic, logical and textual criteria. Put differently, regulation considers the linguistic meaning of *Shar'î* texts, the conceptual implications of the issues under scrutiny, and the cultural background under which the examination is effected. Actually, regulation is what makes any intellectual endeavor scientific, objective and reliable.

The Islamic *Fiqh* has its own regulations, which include its underlying principles, objectives and characteristics (being realistic, universal, humanitarian, moral, objective, etc.).

For example, if someone commits an act that contradicts with Islam, he should never be deemed as a disbeliever without considering the *Fiqhî*

regulations pertaining to this particular issue; i.e. that his case meets all the conditions that nullify one's belief in Islam and all the conditions that bring him into the state of disbelief.

The absence of regulations in *Fiqh* leads to dangerous attitudes and practices, such as fanaticism, non-objectivity, irrational generalization, inconsistency and misunderstandings of the *Shar'î* texts.

Fiqhî-Related Causes of Violence

Violence has many causes relating to different cultural, methodological and theoretical issues and disciplines. Some of these causes are linked to the *Fiqhî* sciences and how they are approached, in terms of comprehension, examination and application.

In this section, we will focus solely on *Fiqh*-related violence. For example, violence can be generated by misunderstanding the *Fiqhî* texts and isolating them from their underlying purposes, implications, conditions and exceptions.

When dealing with the causes of violence, we should address various factors, some of which are connected with how to deal with the *Fiqhî* disciplines; some with the *Fiqhî* bodies; and some with external bodies and issues that have something to do with *Fiqh* and its community or bodies.

I. Causes of Violence Concerning How to Deal with *Fiqhî* Sciences

The *Fiqhî* disciplines constitute an integrated *Shar'î* cognitive system underlying the more detailed *Fiqhî* rulings, in accordance with a realistic, interpretive and discretional methodology that is well-defined by the *Shar'î* texts and conventions.

Any failure in dealing properly with these *Fiqhî* disciplines can possibly lead to the emergence, justification or promotion of the state of violence. This failure may generate some theoretical justifications and/or textual misunderstandings, reflecting a defect in the chosen, *Fiqhî* action or its practitioners.

Reasons for this can be summarized in the following points:

1. Exclusion of one or more *Fiqhî* disciplines when studying human issues. This would be an elimination of the essence of *Fiqhî* rulings and solutions, as a result of a narrow-minded and superficial consideration.

   For example, to ignore the *Fiqh* of Purposes would make one go amiss regarding all the benefits and objectives intended by *Fiqhî* rulings; to ignore the *Fiqh* of Controversy would limit the wide range of opinions and remove the values of dialogue, open-mindedness and tolerance from the relationships between different schools and doctrines; to ignore the *Fiqh* of Exceptions would render all cases similar, although they may have different causes and circumstances, which is completely illogical and causes a lot of problems (making the lawful equal to the unlawful, right equal to wrong, etc.). By the same token, to ignore the *Fiqh* of Regulations would make everything unorganized and lead to disobedience of the religious teachings.

   To avoid these problems, none of the *Fiqhî* sciences should be excluded. They should be all taken into consideration when examining any given issue, in order to come out with a full-scale, almost perfect judgment about it. However, this is not intended to mean that all the *Fiqhî* disciplines should be given equal importance or addressed from the same baseline and focus for every single detail so that the right judgment can be ultimately reached. This is something that can never be recommended. Different *Fiqhî* sciences vary in their extent of involvement in any issue which is under scrutiny. In certain issues, for example, the component concerning purposes is more relevant than the one concerning exceptions, while in other cases, the linguistic sense is inferior to the deep structure and hidden implications.

   As mentioned above, the prevalence of violence is the product of defects in the *Fiqhî* system if some disciplines or aspects are excluded. An example of this is to ignore the *Fiqh* of Exceptions in the case of war. Children, women and old people are not fought during war, since there is no reason to kill them. From this exception, we can conclude

a general principle that these categories of people are not included in the fighting forces, which is confirmed by the *Shar'î* texts.

It is important to stress that in this example, different *Fiqhî* disciplines are addressed: the *Fiqh* of Purposes, the *Fiqh* of Exceptions and the *Fiqh* of Regulations. Most importantly, the *Fiqh* of Exceptions takes first priority, for it is an exceptional case and can by no means be compared to the general rule.

2. Excessive or careless use of one or more *Fiqhî* sciences when trying to reach judgments. It is wise to hit a middle course between excessiveness and negligence. An example of exaggeration is to excessively stick to the *Shar'î* purposes, regardless of their convenience. One of the cases involved in this example is to overly focus on the principles of facilitation and leniency to the extent that they lose their real *Shar'î* meaning. As a result, everything, even issues relating to the Islamic Creed itself, could be abandoned on the basis of absolute, unregulated toleration.

   This exaggeration in leniency may be perceived by some people to be a careless attitude towards the religious teachings and a way to follow personal whims and desires. Thus, they may proceed to practice verbal or physical violence against those who adopt this exorbitant approach.

   The same example applies to negligence: Some *Fiqhî* practitioners ignore the principle of leniency. In *Hajj*, for example, they may ignore an exception that makes it easy for people to perform a particular rite. This would result in several problems; over-crowding, violent quarrels and, possibly, physical injuries among the weak and old people.

   Also, ignoring leniency may cause the *Fiqhî* practitioners to be very strict when communicating with the other view, which may lead to harsh quarrels and disputes. Under such a situation, violence is most likely to thrive.

In all these problems, moderation is the best policy. Both excessive strictness and carelessness are against the purposes of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*.

II. Causes of Violence Concerning *Fiqhî* Bodies

A *Fiqhî* body is an entity that undertakes a *Fiqhî* action. It is responsible for research, education, consultation and publication of the field of *Fiqh*. That entity may be an individual (a *Fiqh* scholar, *Muftî*, *Shar'î* official, etc.) or it may be a board or an organized institution (boards of *Fatwâs*; *Fiqh* academies; *Shar'î* faculties and departments; etc.). The *Fiqhî* activities vary depending on the *Fiqhî* body, methodology, quality of study, reliability and relevance to reality.

Any defects in the *Fiqhî* system can result in the phenomenon of violence, create a threatening situation, or promote doctrinal frictions and social tension. This can happen by adopting one single *Fiqhî* approach, being biased to certain parties, holding a neutral position or any matter that may affect the *Fiqhî* bodies and their basic reformative message.

Here are the main defects that can negatively affect a *Fiqhî* body and possibly cause violence.

- **Adopting a single, extremely strict or careless *Fiqhî* approach.** This can breed generations that are too meticulous or, conversely, too lenient in following the Islamic teachings. Naturally, extremism (on both sides) can cause discords, and even violent quarrels, among people.

  It is worth mentioning that there is no single best *Fiqhî* approach to deal with all human affairs. Strictness can be suitable for some cases but not others. Leniency may be a successful solution for many problems and an aggravating factor for others. In a word, *Fiqh* is a "case-sensitive" system.

- **Being biased to a political or ideological party.** If a *Fiqhî* body is perceived to be biased, it will be liable to many academic, moral and political accusations. This can affect its credibility and nullify its efforts to create moderate, open-minded mentalities.

  When the *Fiqhî* bodies become untrustworthy, people are likely to look for other sources of *Fiqhî* information. This can lead them to unreliable parties which work to disseminate undesirable attitudes

among them, such as narrow-minded beliefs and violent behavior.

- **Holding a neutral position towards all the bodies that contribute to a moderate culture.** Unlike the last case, a *Fiqhî* body may adopt inactive, pessimistic and black-and-white views. It considers all the manifestations of cultural, political and social diversity to be the same, generalizing accusations of disbelief and deviation, and finally proceeding to keep away from this so-called "corrupt" environment.

  This passive neutralism often results in an intellectual, *Fiqhî* and educational gap, which gives an opportunity for other undesirable ideologies and attitudes to dominate and influence the new generations.

  Moderation requires that the *Fiqhî* bodies maintain positive neutralism. Taking a supportive or opposing position towards a party or an ideology should be based on the requirements of reality, the *Shar'î* regulations and its specific considerations. A true *Fiqh* scholar is he who communicates with all people (both other scholars and the general public) and does not abandon any party on the basis of a difference in opinion.

- **Non-cooperation between *Fiqhî* bodies.** This can result in different, conflicting points of view, which may turn into violent disputes and quarrels. Cooperation and sharing common goals would save time and effort, bring about many achievements and improve the relations among the *Fiqhî* bodies.

- **Passivity of some *Fiqhî* bodies.** Some *Fiqhî* bodies withdraw completely from social life and stop playing their basic role in the society and stop evaluating their action, renewing their instruments and refining their underlying principles and goals.

III. Causes of Violence Concerning Non-*Fiqhî* Bodies

Fiqh-related violence can be produced by non-*Fiqhî* bodies, whether in a planned or unplanned way. Their contribution to the promotion of violence depends on their nature, policies, attitudes towards *Fiqh* itself and relations with the *Fiqhî* institutions.

How those bodies approach *Fiqh* and *Fiqhî* bodies can be illustrated in the following points:

- **Complete Exclusion of *Fiqhî* Disciplines and Scholars.** This reflects an ideological background that denies religion as a perfect means of looking after the interests and solving the problems of humankind. However, this contradicts the fact that *Fiqh* scholars have contributed, through their invaluable activities and interventions, to the cultural and cognitive development of society.

  This denial can undoubtedly lead to, and promote, violence: Rejection of *Fiqh* scholars and institutions will result in religious and cultural ignorance. Undesirable and deviant thoughts will influence the collective mentality. In such a case harmful beliefs and behavior, such as violence, become usual.

  Such a policy is not justifiable because of its allegation that *Fiqh* scholars are ineffective or unable to meet the needs of the society. Nevertheless, facts contradict these claims. On the one hand, there are actually many distinguished and successful *Fiqh* scholars. On the other hand, these claims are inaccurate generalizations; it is not fair to consider all *Fiqh* scholars inactive on the grounds that there are a few unqualified or dishonest *Fiqh* scholars.

- **Selective Exclusion.** This may concern persons, information or certain occasions. Some *Fiqh* scholars may be excluded because they are not approved by certain influential parties, because of their *Fiqhî* beliefs, frankness in expressing their opinions, increasing popularity and influence, etc.

  Also, some *Fiqhî* information or subjects may be excluded because they are not considered appropriate for the cultural mainstream or official preferences. Thus, the *Fiqhî* education provided for the public will be inadequate and, consequently, will lead to undesirable thoughts, beliefs and behavior.

  Similarly, certain events and circumstances in which *Fiqh* is required to help in tackling contemporary problems are sometimes avoided or, at least, deprived of real opportunities to make a big difference.

All these forms of exclusion or neutralization of *Fiqhî* elements (scholars, content and its use on certain occasions) can affect the integration of *Fiqh* and make it unable to perform its essential role of enlightenment. This will create a state of chaos and lack of cultural discipline, which is a fertile ground for disorders and clashes.

Fiqhî Approach to Deal with Violence

Having clarified the definition of the *Fiqhî* sciences as an integrated, *Shar'î*, cognitive system, and discussed the causes of violence from the perspectives of the *Fiqhî* disciplines, *Fiqhî* community and non-*Fiqhî* parties, it is better to talk about the final outcome we are looking for in the current Islamic and *Fiqhî* situation; that is, to solve the problem of violence successfully. All our endeavors should be aimed at serving our religion; protecting and improving our Muslim societies; and securing well-founded, reliable and sound *Fiqhî* actions.

In this section, we are going to suggest some possible solutions for the problem of violence from a *Fiqhî* point of view.

I. Attempt to Decide on a Modern *Fiqhî* Strategy

It is necessary to design a framework scheme that involves all the *Fiqhî* approaches, disciplines and fundamentals; employs the methodology of scientific research; combines and enhances efforts; utilizes modern technologies and intellectual innovations; focuses on practical solutions; and addresses the Muslim nation as a whole. In all these efforts, we should hit a balance between the means of logic, the requirements of the *Sharî'ah* and the considerations of reality.

This scheme should aim at forming a modern *Fiqhî* mentality that is based on thorough *Fiqhî* knowledge, understands Islam in an original way, and deals with *Sharî'ah* as an integrated entity, not as separate parts. The basis of such a mentality should include the attitude of a thinker, mufti, judge and *Fiqhî* scholar in any field (education, media, administration, planning, etc.); one of a responsible, true Muslim. This nature is determined by the specific context, professional career and social roles of the scholars involved.

It is not intended here to discuss this scheme in detail; this requires an independent essay. Nevertheless, it is quite sufficient to say that it will be a theoretical framework for the procedures that aim to tackle the very factors that generate, promote, justify or allow violence.

Practically, efforts should focus on refining Muslim personalities through educational, social and religious programs provided by reliable and well-prepared tutors and mentors. Legislations should be introduced, media content modified and educational curricula improved in order to put the desired reforms into effect.

Finally, it is important that the comprehensive Islamic scheme to tackle violence is implemented in a highly civilized environment where freedom, awareness and human ideals stretch their wings over all aspects of life in the society.

Justifications for Dealing with Violence from a *Fiqhî* Prospective

These justifications are three types:

Islamic and Shar'î justifications

They suggest solutions for problems, correct the wrong and reach a settlement when a dispute arises. Allah, the Al-Mighty, says:

{"...And settlement is best..."} [An-Nisâ' (Women): 128]

Allah also says:

{"And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make a settlement between the two..."}

[Al-Hujurât (The Apartments):9]

These justifications define two ways to deal with violence:

a) Prevention of the phenomenon by spreading a culture of non-violence.

b) Actual treatment of the problem when it arises. Such treatment is determined according to the nature of the problem and its repercussions.

These justifications state the *Shar'î* reality of the system of the religion, which basically denies violence, except for the legal acts of violence such as resisting and repelling occupation and preventing its material, moral, cultural, ethical, economical, social and environmental dangers.

Another example is the execution of the *Shar'î* prescribed punishments on criminals and aggressors as stated in the books of *Fiqh*, judiciary and law, under the supervision of the ruler or those in authority, such as the Judicial Authorities, etc. Similarly, a third example can be seen in putting some educational and disciplinary standards into effect such as disciplining children by harmless, slight beatings, using force to prevent aggressive behavior and potential harm from mentally handicapped persons and defending one's property, self or honor against aggression. In such cases, a man finds himself obliged to use some kind of verbal or physical violence in order to protect himself against an aggressor.

The cases and situations in which violent procedures may be used are defined and can be scrutinized by induction, investigation and *Fiqhî* collective work so that we can avoid disagreement and wrong application of rulings and *Shar'î* texts dealing with disciplining, in the light of the complete religious system and not according to personal inclinations.

We can state that Islam is the religion of tolerance, mercy, peace, kindness and easiness without negligence, immoderation, aggression or terrorism. False accusations made against Islam must be refuted and should not be manipulated to wrongly accuse it and its followers.

Historical Justifications

They support the non-violent stance in the cultural, reformative, educational and *Fiqhî* work throughout the history of Islam that is based on education, culture, wisdom and good instruction, discussing in a way that is most benevolent and rejection of all forms of violence: verbal or physical and individual or collective. The history of Islam underlines this non-violent stance and affirms the necessity of putting the *Fiqhî* treatment of violence into effect.

Real, Contemporary Justifications

These justifications have proved that violence and extremism do not produce any benefit or good. Instead, they might result in temporary solutions such as taking revenge, following one's inclinations, boasting, intimidating, etc.

On the other hand, it is very clear that wise, moderate and practical *Shar'î* treatment of violence is the logical, intelligent and realistic way that has achieved real, reformative and human cures based on a balanced outlook and specific circumstances in which civil, political and intellectual views are in harmony with the Muslim society.

This treatment is based upon the deep knowledge of *Fiqhî* sciences, purposes and methods as well as the reality, needs and changes, and conditions of the society, the state and the world.

These *Fiqhî* treatments of violence have provided the *Shar'î* discourse with its factors of existence and achieved its cultural, educational and civilizational contributions.

II. How the *Fiqhî* Treatment Combats Violence

The word "ways" here means the various methods adopted by *Faqîhs* (scholars of *Fiqh*) and other specialists in various cognitive fields of life in order to eradicate violence or, at least, decrease its negative effects. These ways relate to other fields of knowledge, *Fiqhî* and non-*Fiqhî* bodies as well as the methodology used to achieve such a treatment.

We can state these ways as follows:

Ways of Treatment on concerning the *Fiqhî* Content

This can be achieved by paying attention to the *Fiqhî* content as an integrated, harmonious, scientific and cognitive framework and a methodology to understand, apply and carry out procedures. This creates an integrated *Fiqhî* mentality that denies violence and extremism and a mentality whose culture and life reflects the *Fiqhî* content.

The essence of this *Fiqhî* content has been described at the beginning of as well as throughout this paper. This content is the essence of *Fiqh* in all its sciences, principles, purposes, aspects, etiquettes and methodologies. If we give attention to this content concerning the fields of education, *Iftâ'* (giving a *Shar'î* ruling on an issue), *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion), judiciary, legislation and codification, media, authorship, theorization, verification and discussion, in universities, assemblies and societies, we may say that this scientific content remains the best way to deal with violence or prevent it by eliminating its cognitive and scientific causes and forming a *Fiqhî* public opinion that denies and condemns violence.

The *Fiqhî* content may be classified into detailed and analyzed topics with a creative spirit, responding to reality and in a way that helps clarify and deal with many violence-related concepts.

Such topics include:

- *"Fiqh Al-Badâ'il"* (Thought of available alternative options)
- *"Fiqh Al-Aqalliyyât"* (Thought of minority groups)
- *"Fiqh Al-Muwâzanât"* (Thought of the balance of harm and interest)
- *"Fiqh Al-Maâlât"* (Thought of the outcome of following certain *Fatwâs*)
- *"Fiqh Al-Jam'iyyât"* (Thought of societies)
- *"Fiqh Al-Mu'assasât"* (Thought of institutions)
- *"Fiqh An-Nawâzil"* (Thought of emerging unprecedented issues)
- *"Fiqh Al-Jihâd"* (Thought of striving in Allah's cause)
- *"Fiqh At-Ta'âyush"* (Thought of co-existence)
- *"Fiqh Al-Muwâṭanah"* (Thought of the compliance of a *Fatwâ* to the conditions of citizens in a country; citizenship)

These topics respond to accurate, specialized studies so as to turn them into a cognitive, *Shar'î* structure that are very important and have an effect in many aspects of life, such as dealing with a disagreeing party and avoiding the use of violence.

These topics establish many facts, eliminate several doubts, exert various efforts and combine different wishes. Thus, they are worth attention as a means of preserving the desired *Fiqhî* content in the present as well as the future.

Ways of Handling Violence on the General, Cognitive Level

The general, cognitive content here refers to the content that contains the sciences related to the Universe, humanity and life (such as psychology, sociology, history, economics, management, ecology, etc.).

These sciences are required in different degrees in order to apply the *Fiqhî* content. This is determined according to the known methodology that aims to make use of these sciences on the *Shar'î* Islamic level.

Examples of these include the following:

- Paying attention to history when trying to understand events, learning lessons and knowing circumstances that shape the course of events.
- Focusing on humanities in order to understand the self and accordingly society. This understanding is a prerequisite for *Ijtihâd* and deduction of rulings. To illustrate, the scholars state that knowing the reality and conditions of the age is a prerequisite of *Ijtihâd*. This is in addition to the other prerequisites (such as knowing the *Shar'î* texts, purposes, fundamentals, etc.).

Thus, it is necessary to take such sciences into account to understand the *Fiqhî* content and apply it to reality.

It is worth mentioning that the consideration of the general, cognitive content is determined according to the needs of the *Fiqhî* institutions as well as the nature of the *Fiqhî* topics related to the above-mentioned sciences. It is also determined according to the social, cultural and intellectual environment in which these topics and events appear and develop.

Furthermore, these sciences may contribute in building the balanced, integrated, cognitive and mental structure that helps exclude violence as well as any unilateral approach that lacks facts, meanings and purposes.

In this context, it may be useful to suggest some scientific concepts that can be studied and verified by *Fiqh* scholars such as:

- *Fiqh* of the Self
- *Fiqh* of the Society
- *Fiqh* of Modernity

- *Fiqh* of Construction
- *Fiqh* of Investment
- *Fiqh* of Civilization
- *Fiqh* of Citizenship
- *Fiqh* of the Environment
- *Fiqh* of the Land

I do not think that this suggestion is made just to add a variety to names, increase the amount of available data and information or follow the scientific mainstream, as is the case with some studies and research. Rather, it is made to satisfy a cognitive, methodological and real need, and to state, discuss and analyze these concepts in a way that fulfills many of the developmental, cultural and cognitive requirements, and achieves effective results so as to understand certain issues, act properly, and cope with the social, environmental and cultural conditions.

"The *Fiqh* of Modernity", for instance, means to compile all the *Fiqhî* rulings that clarify the facts and details of the cultural and civilizational products such as crafts, agriculture, lease, financial investments, transactions, environmental activities and social and familial behavior that have their own *Fiqhî* rulings. Compiling and emphasizing these Fiqhî rulings and connecting them with the culture and its requirements, outcomes and reality is a result of the methodological and academic need to discuss the topic of Islamic civilization. This can be done by compiling its material and regulating it according to Islamic literature as well as the historical and contemporary reality of the Muslim world. It also responds to life, social and cognitive needs by pointing out the subject of civilization and convincing the people to apply it to reality.

Furthermore, "the *Fiqh* of Modernity" may refer to having accurate knowledge about civilization and its justifications, factors, reality and reciprocal effects. This calls the Muslims and *Fiqh* scholars to know about traditions, invest reality, look into history and consider the facts and courses of civilization and the human contributions to the procession of construction, renaissance and prosperity. This shall be a means to realize a mature, creative mentality, which can deal with civilization according to the Islamic reference based on *Fiqh* and the *Fiqhî* system referred to herein in several positions.

The word *"Fiqh"* mentioned in the topic of modernity as well as the other topics means the accurate, comprehensive and deep knowledge of the essence of the cognitive content and the scientific subject according to the *Shar'î* as well as the linguistic implication of the word *"Fiqh"*. That is, the term "Fiqh" is usually used to refer to the accurate and in-depth understanding of a particular matter. Allah, the Almighty, says:

> ***{"...So what is [the matter] with those people that they can hardly understand any statement?"}*** [An-Nisâ' (Women): 78]

Moreover, Allah, Glorified be He, says:

> ***{They said," O Shu'ayb, we do not understand much of what you say..."}*** [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 91]

This affirms that the *Fiqhî* disciplines that should be applied to life and reality involve various *Fiqhî* sciences (e.g., branches, principles, purposes, controversies, emerging issues, exceptions, etc.). They should be applied in a deep and cognitive manner that helps uncover facts, reach results and suggest alternatives as well as helps collect all relative data, information and variables.

Ways of Treatment involving the *Fiqhî* Authority

The *Fiqhî* authority (the knowledgeable person or *Fiqhî* institution from which *Fiqhî* work is issued) is the key element in providing perfect, coordinated and inspiring *Fiqhî* work that actually represents the guidelines of the system already referred to. This calls for preparing the *Fiqhî* personality (on the individual, social and formal levels) bearing scientific, educational and realistic characteristics that qualify it to undertake its role perfectly. This role should be constructive not destructive, unifying not disuniting, and attractive not repulsive. Moreover, it should be based on cooperation and responsiveness, not on aggressiveness and stubbornness, and on easiness, not on immoderation.

This desired model personality would remind us of the preceding eminent Imâms who absorbed the principles of *Fiqh* and the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. As a result, they were of a great value in the fields of reformation and social

construction not to mention their significant role in the continuity of the transformation of knowledge and the accumulation of cultural production with all its elements and forms.

The characteristics of the *Fiqhî* personality we seek in our current time and in the future are:

1. Possessing full and accurate knowledge of *Fiqh* along with active commitment, hard work harmony, coordination and a will to reform. This is in addition to making use of acquired experience, accumulated knowledge and collaboration.
2. Having a deep awareness of other sciences related to *Fiqh*, such as psychology, sociology and history. This awareness differs from one scholar to another and from one institution to another according to the ranks of the scholars, tasks undertaken by the institutions, and the fields and subjects of *Fiqh*.
3. Being acquainted with the true state of affairs and the conditions around the world and the home country in addition to the conditions of individuals, associations and organizations. Moreover, such a personality should consider the various new events in medicine, biology, environment, media, family, economy, education, etc.

   Such knowledge differs according to the kind of events and incidents and their accurateness, ramifications and relation to other issues. The application of this knowledge should help to identify its methodology and the amounts required.
4. Observing the authority of the creed, matters related to worship, education, morals and culture which the *Faqîh* or *Fiqh* institutions should have. This authority is not less important than the *Fiqhî* competence and capacity regarding the power of effect, the motivation for work, the imitation of good examples and the prevention of dispraised controversies. This authority also relates to the elimination of any *Fitnah* (dissension), aspects of mistrust, doubt and disparagement of *Faqîhs* and scholars and their educational and civilizational role and responsibility in delivering *Fatwâs* (legal opinions).

Paying no attention to the opinions of knowledgeable scholars who are accused of disbelief or having educational and moral deficiencies may be a cause of violence. In fact, ignoring the opinions of real scholars results in one listening to the opinions of those who do not have adequate knowledge or no knowledge at all. In this way, a recipient may fall into behavioral deviation and intellectual confusion that may, in turn, lead to violence.

5. Observing credibility, objectivity and positive neutrality; avoiding indulgence in personal or public inclinations; rejecting internal, external, social, political and local pressures; avoiding direct confrontation with the public, elite or politicians; working to achieve reconciliation and reunion; narrowing gaps; and giving others the benefit of the doubt. The conscious, knowledgeable *Faqîh* should be aware of all trends and approaches to make a *Shar'î* and realistic balance which combines both Allah's satisfaction and religious uprightness on the one hand, and the various collective, individual, national and internal needs and interests on the other hand. This can be realized by examining the texts of *Sharî'ah* and different opinions of well-versed scholars.

   In our religion, history and heritage there are many examples of the sound methodology of the knowledgeable scholar who keeps his eyes on the glorious verse that states:

   {"...I only want reform to the best of my power..."}

   [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 88]

6. Continuous learning, revision and making use of others' knowledge as far as science, the environment, individuals and community are concerned. Furthermore, one should not depend only on exporting one's knowledge and culture, but one should import the other's renewed knowledge and culture and repel the feelings of superiority in science and education. Also, one should avoid being proud and self-conceited, and not seek fame, immediate pleasures and material benefits, which may make the door wide open for Satan.

Ways of Confrontation involving non-*Fiqhî* Authority

Non-*Fiqhî* authority includes ideological, political, civil, syndicate, and cultural institutions and all other institutions that work in fields other than *Fiqh*, including *Iftâ'* (giving legal opinions), *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion), education, judicature, theorization and reform.

Here, we can refer to the cultural and civil societies, political parties, human rights and media organizations, legal and regional organizations and other bodies.

These bodies should play two significant roles in the treatment of violence:

First: To build their policies and decisions on the teachings of Islam, and the productive, moderate, creative and universal human and civilizational culture which help handle violence, whether through prevention, precaution, treatment, reform or remedy.

Second: To establish their relations with *Fiqhî* institutions in a way that brings about good, rejects violence and prevents evil, forcefulness, discrimination, conspiracy, alienation and hostility.

This can be realized by the following:

- **Paying respect to *Fiqhî* institutions** regarding their cognitive specialization, practical performance and figures. Accordingly, the non-*Fiqhî* institutions should not interfere in the fields of *Fiqhî* institutions and vice versa. In fact, this intervention resulted in many wrong practices and misunderstandings that have led to violent reactions and aroused the feelings of supporters of *Fiqh*, forcing some of them to, intentionally or unintentionally, encourage violence, whether by theorizing violence, supporting it, or keeping silent about or showing indifference to acts of violence.

  From the cognitive, methodological and realistic perspectives, it is neither logical, objective nor fair to say that scientific institutions having no relation to Islamic *Fiqh* should give *Fatwâs* and interpretations, or even instigate against the *Fiqhî* institution to achieve their goals.

The truth is that *Fiqhî* work should be entrusted to jurists and *Fiqhî* institutions dedicated to this field and having the cognitive, methodological, formal and public authority enabling them to undertake *Fiqhî* activity, covering all its dimensions, requirements and fields.

This should be applied to *Fiqh* the same as it should be applied to other sciences, such as philosophy, medicine and engineering. That is, scientific specialization and cognitive competence must be considered so that matters are carried out properly.

- **Avoiding disparaging eminent scholars of *Fiqh*** and depreciating their role and cultural message. What is the benefit for society in ridiculing scholars or accusing them of being unknowledgeable, dishonest or foolish! This will lead to nothing but making matters worse. Doing so will not solve the problem, but it will be a problem itself that justifies the spread and nourishment of violence.

- ***Fiqhî* institutions should respect the non-*Fiqhî* ones,** benefit from them and seek an agreement as well as cooperate with them to achieve common welfare.

  One of the causes of violence and conflicts may be related to the marginalization of the role of *Fiqh* and the exclusion of many scholars of *Fiqh*, accusing them of weakness, failure and backwardness. This has led to the spread of idle minds, the occurrence of violence as well as other reactions, and the appearance of various forms of confrontation and clashes, ideological tension and social troubles.

  In a nutshell, the *Fiqhî* institutions all over history and on many occasions were well-established and effective in society, and were supported by both the public and the leaders, materially and morally. In addition, they continue to represent a power cooperating with other institutions and associations. By the establishment of these institutions, the cognitive *Shar'î* authority has continued and one of the general cultural courses has been constructed.

III. *Fiqhî* Methods of Treating Violence

These methods refer to the whole theoretical tools and practical manners of actually treating violence, and changing opinions and cognitive, cultural and jurisprudential views, in particular, into applicable and executive solutions possible to be realized, evaluated, reviewed and corrected.

These methods are connected to many current fields, such as media, education, scientific research, finance, law, charity, etc.

These methods can be described as follows:

Methods Using Media and Information

They are the practical ways that can treat violence using old forms of media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers, etc.) as well as modern forms (e.g., satellite channels, Internet, disks and CDs, etc.). The present time has witnessed a sweeping flood in this field and there is no need to tackle, analyze and introduce its performance with regard to *Fiqhî* discourse, including *Iftâ'*, *Ijtihâd*, education, awareness, etc.

In this respect, we need to focus on the following:

- Rectifying the media and its contents in a scientific, objective, methodological and comprehensive way so as to lead us to fruitful work in the future, taking into consideration the negatives to be avoided and the positives to be supported, developed and activated.
- Formulating a collective, universal, *Fiqhî*, integrated media plan to determine the policies of the media, *Fiqh* and legal rulings as well as their components, methods, rules, regulations, fields and effects. This plan will aim to establish the *Fiqhî* and *Shar'î* structure that leads to achieving complete religious awareness and a comprehensive *Shar'î* culture characterized by positiveness, constructiveness, tolerance, facilitation, progress, constructive integration and useful communication with the self as well as others. In this way, the fields of media will integrate together and the *Fatwâ* contents will coordinate with the contents concerning education and exhortation. Likewise, the contents of information and news will coordinate with the contents of entertainment, culture and

civilization in general. The starting point may be through launching new stations or supporting some of the existing ones. This, in turn, will have a great effect on achieving this desired structure.

Methods using Research and Compilation

The current research on *Fiqh* is in a serious need to be reconsidered, especially their methodological and stylistic aspects, in order to fulfill the scientific, developmental and cultural needs of the society and nation.

In most cases, this field of research is marked by partialness, repetition, extemporization, generalization and personal objectives such as obtaining certificates or promotions. In addition, the aim is often to achieve profits, comply with some civil and social events, and market some materials in the educational curricula, etc.

In short, this compilation has not been established on the basis of a comprehensive and integrated awareness of the *Fiqhî* system. Rather, it is based on only one of its branches or sides, such as observing the aspect of faith while excluding the practical and moral aspects, or observing one of the partial sides of *Fiqh* without relating it to the principles of *Fiqh*.

This has produced many signs of a disturbed and distorted cultural structure in many generations of the recipients and learners. But, in the same time, some general and specific research and compilations have been marked by seriousness, innovation, making contributions, cultural development and supporting an integrated, positive and organized *Shar'î* structure. However, these works require a considered qualitative accumulation and expansive utilization. They also need to be connected with the other aspects of culture and knowledge as well as fields of development and construction in order to achieve the desired cultural and historical contribution.

Among the methods that have been introduced and suggested are the following:

- The determination of cognitive, *Shar'î* and *Fiqhî* needs.
- The coordination among all or most of the various research institutions. With this in mind, such coordination can be conducted among some universities, *Fiqhî* counsels and research centers in the Arab countries.

➢ Paying attention to terms of research which have great benefits on developing and initiating research for the sake of development, culture and the common welfare.

This includes:

1. Taking care of the editing and elaboration of a term as well as other related terms; applying it to its relative field and position; and observing its connection with other terms on the scientific and cultural level, etc.

   An example of this is the term "violence". This term urgently needs to be elaborated and clarified in order to determine its meaning and essence, as well as the terms related to it, such as terms of "terrorism", "*Jihâd*", "fighting", "disciplining", "*Ta'zîr*" (discretionary punishment), etc. This, in turn, will help determine what is right and wrong as regards to understanding it, applying it, carrying out discussions and many other fields of life. This will also help avoid useless arguments, a waste of time, and attacks on individuals and properties.

2. Elaborating the points of dispute. This may be seen as a branch of the above item. It aims at indicating points of agreement and disagreement as well as points in which there is some hesitation, a difference of opinion and confusion. However, hesitation, difference of opinions and confusion may lead to clarity, agreement and decision as a result of scrutinized thinking, examination and consultation along with the desire of seeking the right course and truthfulness.

➢ Adopting the policy of carrying out scientific research for any decision based on accurate and deep studies. Here, we mean the *Fiqhî* decision of stating a *Fatwâ* which may involve a partial *Fatwâ* or a general or specific *Shar'î* ruling. This decision should be taken in a clear and summarized way and should be wholly or almost totally agreed upon. This is a very important matter for deciding things and explaining matters. An example of this is the subject of violence; that is, when a decision is issued concerning the definition of violence, its fields and pertaining rulings, the difference between violence and resistance of occupation forces, and the punishment of a criminal or dissenter should be considered.

Methods in Education

These methods, in a nutshell, refer to the techniques adopted in various educational stages. Here, we should pay more attention to what is known as "*Shar'î* Education", where the following matters must be considered:

- It has to be conducted as a *Kuttâb*[1] or a Qur'ân nursery school and continue until graduation from an institute or college in order to guarantee a developed and gradual accumulation of knowledge throughout the different educational stages.
- It has to be built on the comprehensive system of Islamic *Fiqh*, and in correspondence with real life so as to develop a *Fiqhî* scientific character which has a deep-rooted entity, an integrated structure and an active impact on society.
- It has to pay attention to two levels of awareness and education:

  First: The Level Concerning General *Fiqhî* Awareness. This should be common among all learners of various specialties, trends and educational levels. This awareness may involve some diversity, depending on the various specialties, but what is important is that such awareness should be based on a minimal amount of learning that guarantees the formation of a balanced and moderate character that lives in harmony with itself, its identity and its environment. This will help eliminate the scientific and educational vacuity that causes violence, extremism and deviation.

  Second: The Level Concerning Specific *Fiqhî* Awareness. It is restricted to certain elite members and groups that will be directed to practice certain *Shar'î* activities, such as *Iftâ'*, *Imamate*, judiciary, teaching, legislation, preaching, guidance, *Shar'î* monitoring and other Islamic affairs. At this level, learners complete the entire curriculum using refined, efficient and fruitful techniques.
- It has to respect *Shar'î* education as well as its scholars and students and eliminate out-of-date residues that cause religious education to be subject to cynicism, mockery and depreciation. This calls for

(1) An elementary school for teaching children the Qur'ân along with reading and writing.

granting this kind of education its material and spiritual dues, such as entrusting it with major tasks as is the case with other scientific subjects, highlighting its role in society, and giving it the necessary financial, legal and media support.

Methods in Oration and Guidance

These methods refer to the techniques adopted in the fields of preaching, religious guidance and calling others to Islam with regard to the rules, ideology and civilization. Such techniques are worthy of consideration and attention due to their significant influence, broad circle of communication and constant flow of interaction. Furthermore, some of these techniques are considered as *Shar'ī* duties or obligations, such as Friday sermons. As a result, these techniques play an influential role in guiding, enlightening and educating recipients, in addition to exhorting them to adopt the content and rationale of the message of the sermon.

The study of the practical performance of some of these techniques shows a serious deficiency in this performance on various levels: the content, methodology, utilization of modern pedagogical, educational and media technologies, and the competence of the individual or authority in charge of preaching and guiding. This deficiency needs a precise, overall correction that is subjected to objectivity and science as well as a firm will to construct, reform and make the best and most appropriate achievements.

Here, we call the authorities in charge of preaching, guidance and Islamic enlightenment to:

- Enhance their current performance.
- Develop comprehensive plans for their future roles.
- Utilize the latest communicational, scientific and technological means.
- Benefit from modern developments in the fields of psychology, sociology and altering public opinion.

This should be in a way that enriches the mission of these authorities and consolidates their role in defining the rational, balanced ideology and developing a sound, moderate and civilized entity.

To qualify for such a leading role, potential individuals or officials should be university graduates who possess the *Shar'î*, practical, media and public knowledge necessary for this important role.

Civil and Social Methods

These methods include the techniques adopted by the family and society and seen in the various aspects of daily life. They can be realized by establishing Islamic morals and values among all members of society, founding systematic and constructive social and cultural organizations which attract people and absorb their energies and hopes, refine their behaviors and safeguard them from the risk of believing in, supporting or becoming involved in violence as a result of a vacuum in their lives, unemployment, and monotony.

Undoubtedly, these institutions play a vital role in maintaining civil rapport and social peace as well as rejecting violence, extremism, radicalism, alienation, despair and frustration, particularly the institutions that are more involved in *Fiqhî* matters, such as mosques, *Kuttâbs*, *Shar'î* boards, and associations of Qur'ân, *Hadîth* and *Fiqh*.

Financial and Charitable Methods

These methods represent the techniques adopted in financial sectors by businessmen and owners of charity and aid projects by allocating portions of the funds and voluntary activities to the treatment of violence, in general, and *Fiqhî* treatment of violence, in particular, by means of spending on media, research, educational and civil fields. Such fields lack finance and need charity work that should not be limited to old traditional forms such as building mosques, providing the needy and dealing with disasters. Charity work should go beyond these traditional areas to include comprehensive *Fiqhî* enlightenment and a general *Shar'î* structure which can tackle violence via treating its causes and supporters. Moreover, charity work requires *Fiqhî* and civilizational guidance, in terms of principles, objectives and the civilization itself, in order to convince charity workers of the necessity of realizing diversified means of renewable, not limited, financial

spending. For instance, establishing a *Fiqhî* satellite channel or spending on research centers and researchers can be as significant as spending on other traditional fields, or even better. This is determined by means of a *Shar'î*, objective and vision for the civilization, which recalls the full *Shar'î* knowledge system referred to herein.

Institutional Methods

They are the techniques within the framework of *Shar'î* institutions (i.e. *Fiqh* complexes, dialogue forums, research centers, *Iftâ'* panels, educational institutions, conferences, etc.).

These methods may overlap with other aforesaid methods, for example research and educational methods. The reason that motivated me to state these methods as a separate item was their vital significance in building comprehensive *Shar'î* knowledge. This is due to the fact that these institutions have the qualities of specialization, expertise, teamwork, a legal nature, financial support, the authority of making decisions and recommendations, the ability to influence society and can use various cognitive, political, financial and civil, domestic or international resources.

These institutions can realize several achievements in terms of the formation of a balanced, reasonable and moderate Muslim character by means of their policies, works and decisions, in addition to the coordination of policies, mobilization of efforts and powers, and designation of scientific techniques necessary for *Fiqhî* renaissance and *Shar'î* awareness. These institutes are qualified to play such roles because of the abovementioned characteristics and because they constitute the connecting links between governments and the people, masses and elites, and real life and the objectives of Islam.

It would not be strange to say that one of these institutions (such as the so-and-so *Fiqh* complex) could be the one destined to revive the Muslim Nation or religion in this century. Has the time come for such a complex or authority to revive our *Fiqhî* speech, *Shar'î* system and sublime civilization?

Human, Ethical, Civilizational and Peaceful Methods

These methods refer to a set of solutions, techniques and behavior that involve tolerance, conciliation, forgiveness, mercy and peace with all people in general, or with those who are engaged in, lured into, or forced to violence. This involvement in violence may be by means of relying on misinterpretations of Islamic texts, rulings, conditions, or information, on one side, or by means of direction and instigation by entities utilizing violence to gain numerous benefits at the expense of people's rights, Islamic values and even the rights of those involved in violence themselves, on the other side.

It is crucial to treat some or all cases of violence in a reformative, lenient and peaceful manner. This would assist those involved in violence to retrieve their self-confidence and balance. Consequently, they would re-mingle with the society and nation. Moreover, a review of various matters and issues, which might have participated, in one way or another, in the emergence and outbreak of violence, has to be carried out. Such a review should avoid the negative consequences resulting from the treatment of enforcing "justice", which do not occur when "kindness" is shown. To illustrate, the treatment of justice is a legitimate way through which people's rights are sustained. Likewise, the treatment of kindness is a legitimate way through which people's noble deeds and traits are established. Allah, Exalted be He, orders justice, performance of good deeds and generosity to kith and kin. Since those involved in violence, or at least some of them, are members of our Muslim society, they can be treated on the basis of the three concepts: Justice in which people's rights are sustained; kindness which is based on forgiveness, generosity and unselfishness; and kinship which ought to be maintained and fortified by refraining from retribution. This may also include making those involved in violence taste the feelings of kinship, bringing them closer into the circle of affinity, affection for society, care of the state and a good testimony of the Muslim Nation.

A good person is the one who is extremely generous, patient and tolerant with a profound desire to reform, excuse and forgive. Being good, such a person should be right-minded, balanced, an expert, forgiving, merciful and tolerant. Also, this person should prefer the Hereafter to this life. In this regard, Allah, the Almighty says:

{"... And the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah..."}

[An-Nisâ' (Women): 77]

Allah also says:

{"And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life]."}

[Ad-Duhâ (The Forenoon): 4]

A good person who pardons violence is the one who may suffer some types of physical or financial violence. By the term 'this person', we refer to any group, state, entity or coalition that undergoes material, verbal or spiritual violence. They all are called towards a reconciliation, peace, forgiveness and kindness. In this connection, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"... And reconciliation is better..."} [An-Nisâ' (Women): 128]

Moreover, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

{"... And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good."}

[Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 195]



Contents

Transliteration System

Arabic Character	Symbol	Example
ء	'	'Ishâ'
ا	a	Amen
ب	b	Bad/Bilâl
ت	t	Tap/Tasmiyah
ث	th	Think/Thaqîf
ج	j	Jew/Janâbah
ح	h	Muhammad
خ	kh	Al-Bukhârî
د	d	Day/Diyah
ذ	dh	Dhul-Hijjah
ر	r	Far/Ribâ
ز	z	Zero/Zayd
س	s	Say/Sura
ش	sh	Show/'Ishâ'
ص	s	'Asr
ض	d	Ifâdah
ط	t	Tawâf
ظ	z	Zuhr
ع	'	Rak'ah

Arabic Character	Symbol	Example
غ	gh	Maghrib
ف	f	Faith/fatwa
ق	q	Qur'ân
ك	k	Kill/Ka'ba
ل	l	Qiblah
م	m	Man/Marwah
ن	n	Noah/Nasî'ah
هـ	h	Has/Hilâl
ة	h/t	Zakâh/Zakâtul-Fitr
و	w	Way/Witr
ي	y	Yard/Talbiyah
ـَ	a	Fadl
ـِ	i	Fiqh
ـُ	u	Sunnah
آ	â	Âdam/Siwâk
ـُو	û	Dâwûd
ـِي	î	Hadîth/Hanafî
ـَو	aw	'Awrah
أي	ay	Ayman



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